

GANDHIJI

STRAY GLIMPSES OF BAPU

KAKA KALELKAR



NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD

First Edition, February, 1950 ; 3000 copies
Rupees Two

Printed and Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai,
Navajivan Press, Kalupur, Ahmedabad

THESE GLIMPSES

The 'Quit India' movement of 1942 sent us all to jail one after another in quick succession. The then Government did not feel safe in keeping us in the jails of our own provinces. It feared that we might engineer some mischief even from within the jail walls. We were, therefore, shifted from one province to another. I had, to my credit, as many as six jails. This brought me in contact with most of the leading political workers of the Central Provinces. In the final jail at Seoni, we spent most of our time in reading, writing and discussions. I used to spend a quarter of an hour after the midday meal every day chatting with friends before resuming my regular work of the day.

Being one of the oldest inmates of Gandhiji's Ashram, my conversation often turned to Gandhiji.

"Why do you not write out these little incidents from Bapu's life?" demanded Thakur Lakshman-singh Chauhan of Jubbulpore. "They throw a particular light on Bapu's outlook on life which is often missed in a regular biography or contemporary history."

"I am like Vyasa Muni the venerable sage of antiquity!" said I jokingly. "He had a whole epic stored in his brains but could not bring it out for want of an amanuensis. 'There is no one on earth,' said Vyasa wistfully, 'who can write down all I have to recount.' Lord Ganesha, the god of learning, ultimately consented to give his services and even he took three years to complete the job."

"I shall be your Ganesha," offered Shri Lakshman-singh enthusiastically.

We spent only a few minutes every day at this delightful occupation and noted down an anecdote or two. We did not expect to be released soon — at least there seemed to be no chance of *my* being released early. When the number of our anecdotes approached a hundred, I hoped to be able to complete at least a rosary of 108. But I was suddenly released when I had just finished the 101st anecdote. I learnt later that some rosaries do contain 101 beads only!

I had hoped to re-write these and arrange them chronologically but plans made in jail seldom get time to be executed after release.

These anecdotes were written when Bapuji was still alive. I had, therefore, to use the utmost restraint and avoid any expression of admiration or devotion for fear of displeasing Bapu if ever he came across my book.

These incidents are sidelights on Bapu's life — mere glimpses noted down from memory. Some of them I heard from Ashram brothers like Mahadev.

These incidents were originally written in Hindustani. They are here rendered into English by Raihana Tyabji assisted by Mrs. Gertrude Murray-Correa. I cannot thank Raihana because, for one thing, it has been entirely a labour of love with her and also because she is as a daughter to me. Let the readers thank the translators if they find these anecdotes entertaining.

Wardha, 4-1-'50 Kaka Kalelkar

STRAY GLIMPSES OF BAPU

1

Mahatmaji, having finished his work in South Africa, returned to India, at the beginning of 1915. On his arrival in Bombay port, he was met by a Parsee press representative eager to be the first of the crowd waiting to interview the famous barrister who had left India as a mere nonentity and was now coming back with all eyes upon him.

Professional success had been the very least of Mahatmaji's African triumphs. He was returning as the long-awaited champion of his crushed and trampled countrymen, having made the world realize that India's right to equality was now a burning problem that no amount of Imperialist stamping could quench. And this he had achieved single-handed, using only his invincible weapons of unyielding gentleness, patient argument and determination to endure whatever might come, secure in his faith in the ultimate victory of truth over mere force.

The Parsee journalist began his interview in English, according to the custom prevailing among educated Indians of those days, when to speak English was the hall-mark of modern culture, conferring a far higher prestige than any other accomplishment.

Instead of replying to the journalist's opening question, Bapu * said, "Friend, you are an Indian

* Bapu i.e., father, as Mahatma Gandhi is lovingly called throughout India. The word *ji*, used either as a suffix to names or alone, is a term of respect, somewhat like 'sir', but applicable to both men and women.

and I, too, am an Indian. Your mother-tongue is Gujarati, and so is mine. Why, then, do you ask your questions in English? Do you imagine that I have forgotten my native tongue because I have lived in South Africa? Or do you consider it more dignified to talk in English because I am a barrister?"

The press-representative may have blushed or he may not have. That is not on record. But he was certainly taken aback, for he gave this remark of Bapuji the most prominent place in his account of the interview.

I have forgotten what questions he asked, as also Bapu's answers to them. But this I do remember — that every one was astonished and that many were pleased that there was at least one amongst our leaders who realized the force and the spontaneity that come of speaking one's own language. The newspapers of the day made much of this story.

2

I was in Shantiniketan when Bapu returned from England. I had gone there with the idea of studying the institution and its atmosphere at close quarters, and I thought the best way to do it would be to work there as a teacher for a few months. It was typical of Ravibabu's * great-hearted generosity to give me the chance.

Those inmates of Bapu's Ashram in Phoenix, South Africa, who had elected to return to India with Bapu, had gone to stay at Shantiniketan † as guests,

* The poet Rabindranath Tagore

† *The school (now also a university) founded by Rabindranath Tagore at Bolpur, Bengal.*

to await his arrival from England. Bapu had sent them along to Mr. Andrews † when he himself left South Africa. Mr. Andrews kept them in Mahatma Munshiram's Gurukul, Haradwar, for a while, and then in Shantiniketan.

From reading newspapers I knew the history of our people in South Africa. A friend had told me about Bapuji's African Ashram. It is probable that the *ashramites* too had heard of me through the same source. The moment I set foot in Shantiniketan, I became more or less part of the Phoenix group. I began to join their morning and evening prayers, and to have my evening meal with them. These *ashramites* made it a point to do an hour's hard labour every morning, before breakfast. The Shantiniketanites had given them a job to do. There was a pond not far from the Shantiniketan huts, and a mound nearby. The job consisted in digging up the mound and dumping it into the pond, with the object of filling up the latter. I have no idea how long ten or twenty men would have taken to finish this task at the rate of one hour's digging and dumping a day. However, we were not concerned with the results, but merely with the labour. We went at it with unabated zeal every morning, with clockwork regularity. And Mr. Pearson * joined us in it too.

When Bapu came to Shantiniketan — I will give an account of his arrival elsewhere — we sat up talking with him till late into the night. Next morning,

† The Rev. C. F. Andrews, a great lover of India, affectionately known as *Deenabandhu*, i.e., brother of the afflicted.

* Mr. Pearson was the colleague of Shri Andrews.

after saying our prayers, off we went as usual to our labours. When we returned — lo and behold, there was our breakfast, fruit etc. all nicely cut and distributed in *thalis*, † ready for us! Who had done this motherly thing for us while we were away on our daily task? I asked Bapu (those days I spoke to him only in English), "Who on earth has done all this?" He answered, "I did it. Why?" I said in a rather embarrassed way, "But why did you do it? It does not seem right, somehow, that you should take all this trouble for us, and we should just sit and eat!" "But why? What does it matter?" he asked. I said, "We must deserve to be served by people like you."

Bapu's answer to this took me completely by surprise. When I said, "We must deserve it", he said in the most natural way in the world, "That is a fact!" I just stared at him, bewildered. He laughed and said, "You had gone away to work, and, having breakfasted, you will go off to work again. I had some time to spare, so I saved you yours. You have acquired sufficient merit by your hour's hard labour to deserve a breakfast like this, have you not?"

I had meant something quite different with my "we must deserve it". My point was that we had not yet acquired sufficient merit to deserve such service from such a great man. But that meaning, of course, never occurred to him! To him, all were alike and equal. I had given of my service, so I had a claim on his.

---

† Large metal plates like round trays used in India.

3

When Gandhiji arrived, Tagore was away from Shantiniketan.

Most of the Shantiniketan people were rice-eaters, whereas I favoured wheat and bread. There were half a dozen Bengali students from round about Ajmer who shared my liking for *chapatis*, and wheat *chapatis* were cooked for them. But they were so few all told. At my first meal in Shantiniketan, I was so hungry from my journey that I polished off all the *chapatis*. They were so leathery that I dubbed them "morocco leather"!

I was a reformer born, and those *chapatis* roused my reforming zeal. I started preaching less rice and more and better bread. I was able to win over five teachers and eleven students to my views, and we turned ourselves into a "Self-helpers' Food-reform League". We started a separate kitchen of our own, did our own cooking, cleaning and washing up. We also banished spices and condiments from our precincts. My *chapatis* became so popular that even non-Leaguers used to visit our kitchen just to have a taste of them. Santoshbabu Mazumdar, who had returned from America after finishing his studies there, was a member of our club. With the zeal of a reformer I said to him one day, "As we scrub our utensils and clean out our rooms, we feel our souls being swept and cleaned also." He retorted with a laugh, "Purifying the heart is not so easy as all that!"

Of course he was right. But this working together did help us to a spirit of mutual goodwill,

brotherliness and co-operation. And Shantiniketan kindly gave us all possible facilities for our experiment.

When Gandhiji came he saw our work, and was delighted. But it was not enough for him, of course! "But why is not the whole common kitchen run along these lines (of self-help)?" he demanded.

With him, to think was to act. He got together all the teachers and managers of Shantiniketan, and explained his views to them. They were horribly embarrassed! Gandhiji was too great a man to be lightly set aside, what could they say to him? As for me, I felt that Bapu was going altogether a little too fast, and I protested, "My tiny experiment is going on quite well. If these people like it they will take it up, and gradually form more clubs of the same sort. A huge common kitchen, with two hundred people, will be rather an unwieldy business. Small clubs with twenty-five or thirty members each will be much better."

But Bapu, that doughty and experienced worker, would have none of this! "It won't work," he declared. "You will need at least sixteen culinary experts for eight clubs. Where will you get them from? No. We shall have to proceed along Army lines; we shall have to learn to work together and eat together. If you feel inclined to form small separate clubs you can do so after some months. Today we must tackle the common kitchen — as it stands."

He was right, of course, and I was silenced. But I felt very uneasy, all the same. I said to myself, "That is all very well, but this institution belongs neither to you nor to me. Gurudev (Tagore was

called "Gurudev" in Shantiniketan) is away. I do wish you would let things be!"

Bapu sent for Jagadananda-babu and Sharad-babu (two heads of departments) and questioned them. "How many servants have you, including the cooks?" "About thirty-five in all," he was told. "What need is there for so many?" he asked, "They must be relieved of their services." The poor manager gaped at him, dumbfounded! He should have said frankly, there and then, that the thing could not be done like that, at a moment's notice. But he perceived that Messrs. Andrews and Pearson were greatly taken up with the idea, and so was Gurudev's son-in-law, Shri Nagendranath Ganguli. As for the students, they had all the wild enthusiasm of monkeys for anything new and exciting. Bapu had set things humming, as usual!

I was interested in Mr. Andrews' reactions. I felt that he was less concerned with the principle of self-help than with the dismissal of those high caste *brahmin* cooks. The institution believed in the principle of one-world family, whereas its *brahmin* cooks stuck to their guns of rigid orthodoxy and allowed no one to set foot in their sacrosanct kitchens! We, however, were not out for immediate social or religious reform. All we wanted was to reform our own lives.

It was decided that Bapu should get all the students together and find out what they thought about these proposed changes which concerned them so nearly, since it was they who would have to do all the work in the absence of servants. Mr. Andrews came to Bapu and said, "Mohan, be prepared to use all your eloquence now! Make such a rousing and

irresistible appeal to these students, that they will be bewitched into doing this thing. Everything depends upon you."

The students gathered together. We all sat tense and eager, with our hearts in our ears, so to speak, waiting for that zealous and eloquent appeal.

It never came. What we heard was just the cool, quiet, everyday voice, telling us just simple, practical things. No eloquence, no flaming zeal, no appeal to sentiment, no high philosophy.

But it did the trick. All the students, even those who were fond of good things and comfort, were roused to enthusiasm and voted in favour of the proposed experiment.

The managers now had only one rather feeble leg left to stand on. They said, "If the servants are to be dismissed at a moment's notice, they must be paid off. And the treasurer has not enough cash on hand at the moment." Neither had Gandhiji, or he would have settled the matter there and then. His *ashramites* were in the same boat. Mr. Andrews' pockets were equally empty. I was a wandering *sadhu*. I still cannot understand what led Gandhiji to ask me, "Have you anything?" "Yes," I said, and handed over the two hundred rupees that were in my possession. And that was that. The servants were paid off, and departed in a daze of amazement. The question now arose—who was to take charge of the kitchen? Gandhiji offered it to me. I refused, not because I lacked self-confidence, but because my little Food-reform League was already in existence and functioning quite successfully. I said so, and added, "I am not in favour of plunging hastily into

not impressed. Moreover, it was always his good luck never to lack helpers in anything he undertook. My friend Rajangam, alias Harihar Sharma, was working in Shantiniketan at the time. He agreed to take over charge! I offered to assist him. Gandhiji said, "It would be well to merge your little experiment into this greater one, and devote all your energies to the latter."

So that is what we did, and I plunged like a demon into my new work. It must have been about 12 noon when the thing was decided. At 3 p.m. we took over charge. In the evening we fed the boys. Gandhiji came himself and lent us a hand: he cleaned and cut up the vegetables. I made the *chapatis* — two hundred of them, because by this time my *chapatis* had become universally popular. I had become quite clever at the job, roasting eight *chapatis* at a time. Some students rolled and flattened the dough into *chapatis*. Chintamani-shastri kneaded the dough for them. Breakfast in the morning consisted of milk and bananas. A group of young boys came forward to scrub the utensils, and I became their leader. To lighten their drudgery some one read aloud to them from an interesting novel, or played the *sitar* to them. This way of lightening labour became quite popular there.

A few days passed in this way — and then Gandhiji started making preparations for his trip to Burma, where he was to visit his old friend Dr. Pranajivan Mehta. Says Harihar Sharma, "I will go along with Bapu!" (Sharmaji had formerly been tutor to Dr. Mehta's children.) I was really annoyed, and went to Gandhiji to grumble a bit. And the result? Very calmly says he, "You can carry on quite well

by yourself. However, I can leave Anna (Harihar Sharma) behind for five or six days if you like. He can follow me a little later." This annoyed me still more. I said, "After all, it was he who had *accepted the responsibility of his own accord.* But now if he wants to go, I do not want him to do me the favour of postponing his departure for five or six days. Let him go! The sooner the better."

Gandhiji was quite unimpressed by my fulminations. He knew I could carry on quite well by myself. "Very well then," he said tranquilly, "he will go along with me." And true enough Anna was off with Gandhiji the very next day!

As to the fate of our experiment, it is enough to say that Ravibabu (Tagore) returned from Calcutta, saw it and gave it his blessings, and expressed his conviction that it would prove of great benefit to the institution and to the Bengalis alike.

Gradually its novelty wore off. The students started getting a bit bored. Mr. Pearson came to the conclusion that although it was a very good thing, it took up too much of the students' energy. We kept it up gallantly for forty days. Then came the holidays. I resumed my peregrinations. And after *the holidays — no more mention of such experiments!*

4

In a few days Gandhiji returned from Burma, while we were still going on with our experiment. *And then came a wire from Poona (February 1915) to* say that Gokhale-ji was no more amongst us. Gandhiji

decided immediately to leave for Poona. Gokhaleji had often asked him to become a member of the Servants of India Society, but Gandhiji had not been able to make up his mind on the subject. Now that Gokhale was dead, however this last wish of his became a sort of command to his illustrious disciple in politics. Gandhiji went to Poona and sent in his application for membership to the Servants of India Society.

Gokhaleji's other disciples were in a fix. (The whole incident has been described in several places by Shastriji in his own inimitable style. There is no need to repeat it here). The long and short of it is, that they knew that Gandhiji was a morsel they would find it difficult to swallow, and even more difficult to digest. On the other hand, Gandhiji was a staunch and loyal supporter of Gokhaleji's political creed. On what grounds, then, were they to reject Gandhiji's application? No wonder they were distracted! When Bapu learned of their uneasiness he divined their difficulty and himself supplied the cure: he withdrew his application. But he did not cut himself off from them. On the contrary, he often attended their meetings in an unofficial capacity, and helped the Society whenever he could.

The moment Gandhiji heard of Gokhaleji's death he took a vow to go barefooted for one whole year. It caused him great inconvenience, but he stuck to it until the vow had run its course.

Ravibabu was in Shantiniketan when Bapu returned from Burma. All the teachers, including me, were consumed with a desire to see how these two great sons of India would conduct themselves at their first meeting. How could Mr. Andrews have known our feelings ? It was as though he had taken a monopoly of his Gurudev and his Mohan ! He simply would not let us enter the room where they were to meet ! The older teachers rebelled, and, so to speak gate-crashed ! Kshiti-babu explained that the first meeting of these great men was a very sacred occasion for us all. We had no desire to listen to their private conversation. We would sit a little and then leave the room. And so at last the mind of 'Mohan's Charlie' was set at rest, and he gave in.

We went into the drawing-room with Bapu. Ravi-babu rose from the sofa on which he had been sitting. His tall, stately figure, his silvery hair, his long beard, his impressive *choga* (gown) — all this went to make a magnificent picture. And there, in almost comical contrast, stood Gandhiji, in his skimpy *dhoti*, his simple *kurta*, and his Kashmiri cap (*aupalli*). It was like a lion confronting a mouse !

We knew that both these men had a heart-felt respect for each other. Ravi-babu made a gesture inviting Gandhiji to sit beside him on the sofa. But, so long as there was a carpet on the floor to sit on, Gandhiji was not going to sit on any couch ! He settled himself on the floor. Ravi-babu had to follow suit. The rest of us sat around for a while, listening

to their first words of greeting and formal courtesy. Then we went away.

They met many times after that. Santosh-babu said to me one day, "They were discussing food and diet one day—*puris* (*luchis*) in particular. Gandhiji, being a strict fruitarian, said, 'To fry bread in ghee or oil to make *puris* is to turn good grain into poison.' 'It must be a very slow poison,' Ravibabu answered gravely, 'I have been eating *puris* the whole of my life, and it has not done me any harm so far!'"

6

Mr. Andrews was a man of unique personality and remarkable learning. He came to this country as a missionary, from which one may gauge his power of renunciation and his love of service. But when he saw that his being a missionary was putting obstacles in the way of his service, and the rules and regulations of the mission were restricting his freedom and cramping his soul, he put off his title of 'Reverend' and became plain 'Mr. Andrews.' He had an extraordinarily soft heart. One day, in the course of a private conversation, he said to me, "I want to serve the people of India as *they* want to be served. Coming from England and setting oneself up as a *guru*, as some people do, has no appeal for me." (It is likely he was referring to Mrs. Annie Besant.) "Nor do I desire to become a Hindu and teach the Hindus the tenets of their own faith." (Perhaps he had Sister Nivedita in mind when he said this.) "All I want is to be a servant of the people of this country." And that is exactly what he was.

When Bapu's Satyagraha in South Africa had assumed a sterner character, Gokhale and others decided to send Mr. Andrews over to help him. Mr. Andrews' friends gathered together to wish him God-speed, and every one gave him some gift as a keepsake. His friend, Mr. Pearson, also brought an offering. He said laughingly, "I have brought you a queer gift!" Mr. Andrews could not guess what it was, and was rather puzzled. Said Mr. Pearson, "I have brought myself! I am coming along with you to help you."

They went to South Africa. Having lived amongst the English, Bapu was a good judge of their character. In the twinkling of an eye these two friends became his friends also. Mr. Andrews said to Gandhiji, "I will call you 'Mohan', and you must call me 'Charlie' henceforth." Their mutual affection grew and grew until they became as blood-brothers. Whenever Mr. Andrews was returning to India from abroad, he would send, without fail, a cable from some port en route — "To Mohan love from Charlie." Bapu's thrifty soul winced at this needless extravagance, but he never could muster up courage enough to tell "Charlie" not to do it!

Mr. Andrews was a champion at forgetting things. If he went to bathe, he left his watch in the bath-room. If he lent or borrowed anything, he never bothered to remember it. That is why, whenever Bapu sent him anywhere, he gave him more money than he actually needed, remarking with a smile, "You must have some money to lose, you know!" Mr. Andrews never kept accounts. On his return from anywhere he would turn out his pockets and hand over to his Mohan whatever was left.

I noticed that after a while Mr. Andrews did not call Bapu " Mohan " any more. He called him " Bapu ", as we all did.

7

It must have been December 1915. The Congress was holding its annual session in Bombay. Bapu, accompanied by his *ashramites*, was staying at the Marwadi Vidyalaya. I was staying elsewhere, but I spent a great deal of time with Bapu. One day he had to go out somewhere, and he started putting away the things on his desk most methodically and carefully. And then I saw that he was searching for something.

" What are you looking for, Bapuji ? " I asked.

" My pencil. It's a tiny pencil ! "

I wanted to save both his time and his trouble, so I took out a pencil from my pocket and offered it to him. But he would have none of it. " No, no ! " he said, " I must have my own pencil ! " " But take this one now ! " I urged, " I will find your little pencil and keep it here. Your time is being needlessly wasted." Then Bapu said, " You don't understand. I simply must not lose that little pencil ! Do you know, it was given to me in Madras by Natesan's little boy ? He brought it for me with such love ! I cannot bear to lose it."

So we hunted and hunted for that naughty little pencil, and at last we tracked it to its lair, and Bapu was happy. It was hardly a couple of inches in length ! I began drawing a picture in my mind of the little boy who had so lovingly given this little pencil to Bapu.

8

I had come into close contact with Gandhiji during my stay in Shantiniketan, and had almost become one of his *ashramites*, living and working with them. His eldest son, Harilal, had come there to see him, and so he also was known to me.

During the Congress Session in Bombay Bapu was sitting writing in the Marwadi Vidyalaya, (where he and his party were lodged), one evening after prayers. I sat near him, reading. Harilal came over to me, sat down, and said, " Kaka, you came into such close contact with Bapu in Shantiniketan, and had become so much a part of the Phoenix party, that we took it for granted that you must have joined Gandhiji's Ashram long ago. It's amazing that you have not done it yet." I replied, " You know how deeply I am attracted towards Bapu. But how can I join him ? I am bound to him with whom I did national work before going on my Himalayan pilgrimage. If he starts some new work, I must offer him my services. It would not be right, would it, to leave him in the lurch, hunting high and low for new workers, while I walked coolly off whither my fancy led me, acquiring new bosses ? "

Bapu was quite absorbed in his writing, so we were talking in very low tones. By a strange coincidence our conversation reached his ears and his consciousness. Involuntarily the words broke from him : " Kaka, your idea is pure gold ! " Then he turned to Harilal, " If all the workers in India worked with such mutual loyalty, we should be out of the wood in no time."

I bowed my head, overwhelmed with gladness. And I confess to a little upsurge of pride, too: "I am worth something, after all!" In that moment I became all Bapu's.

The Bombay Congress finished its work. I went to Baroda, and started doing village-work in Sayajipura, four or five miles from the town proper. Bapu came to hear that, although I was working under Barrister Keshavrao Deshpande, actually there wasn't anything particular there for me to do. Whereupon he wrote a letter to Deshpande-ji, saying "You are not making any special use of Kaka, whereas we want to open a national school in the Ashram. Please let us have Kaka."

Deshpande-saheb took me to Ahmedabad and said, "Regard this as a larger and more all-embracing form of our own Ganganath National School, and stay on here." Deshpande-ji thus left me in the Ashram in exactly the same way as parents take their newly-wed daughter to her husband's home and entrust her to the care of her in-laws!

I had just come when Gandhiji suddenly went away to Champaran. I did not want to leave the Baroda work at sixes and sevens, so I went there for four days to make the final arrangements. The managers of the Ashram must have written to Gandhiji that Kaka had gone away to Baroda. Behold! immediately came a letter from him to me, and one to Deshpande-saheb! To Deshpande-saheb Gandhiji wrote, "You have given Kaka away, and have no longer any authority over him. You cannot call him away in this fashion." To me he wrote, "No man can serve two masters simultaneously." I was deeply

hurt. I wrote and explained, but I felt that that was not enough. For nearly a year after this I confined myself to the Ashram grounds, never setting foot outside its boundaries except to go out for my evening walk. And at last I was able to convince Gandhiji that I was no weather-cock in my loyalties. After that he himself took me out travelling with him once or twice.

When Gandhiji started his Satyagraha in Champaran, I could not hold myself in. I begged him to let me go there and join the movement and the Satyagraha. His reply was, "You are an old hand at this kind of thing. National service is no new thing for you. For you to leave your work there and retire into a jail here would be no spiritual discipline — rather would it be a form of self-indulgence. I want to give a chance to new people now. You stick to your work and do it with all your might."

9

Shri Kishorlal-bhai Mashruwala was practising law in Akola. He was rather under the influence of Shri Thakkar-bapa. Thinking this a good chance to do some national service, Mashruwala went off to Champaran in answer to Gandhiji's appeal for volunteers. Gandhiji saw that while he had good stuff in him, his health was weak and that he was suffering from chronic asthma. He talked with Mashruwala a while and then said, "Look! your place is not here; it's in the Ashram where I have opened a school. Sankalchand-bhai is there, and Kaka, and

Phulchand, and Popatlal. Go and lend them a hand. Go today. If you stay here I shall have to worry about you; and one more load will be added to my already heavy burden. So please go this very day."

What could Mashruwala do? He came straight to the Ashram, and became Gandhiji's for ever.

10.

1916-17 saw Bapuji settled in Gujarat, and for the first time that province felt "I, too, am something!" The Bombay Provincial Conference used to hold annual sessions, which were attended by Sindhis, Gujaratis, Maharashtris and Karnatakis. When it became known that Gandhi was in favour of redistribution of provinces on a linguistic basis, a few Gujarati workers conceived the idea of setting up a Gujarat Provincial Political Conference. They came to Gandhiji. Gandhiji placed his conditions — that is to say, his method of work — before them. The workers accepted it, and Gandhiji consented to become President of the Conference.

The fun of it was, that it never occurred to anybody that they were doing a rather unconstitutional thing in thus decentralizing the Bombay Provincial Conference without first asking its permission or consulting the Congress. The Congress was not very well organized in those days.

The Conference was given the purely Indian name of *Gujarat Rajakiya Parishad* (Gujarat Political Conference). It was held in Godhra. Gandhiji arrived, punctual to the minute. He delivered his speech in Gujarati. Lokamanya Tilak had also

been invited to the Conference. He arrived a trifle late, as was his wont. Gandhiji welcomed him with great deference and respect, but could not refrain from saying: "Lokamanya is half-an-hour late. If we are half-an-hour late in winning Swaraj, be the sin on Lokamanya's head!"

11

I, too, had gone to Godhra with Bapu. The Subjects Committee met, and the workers placed the draft forms of the various resolutions before Gandhiji for his consideration.

The first resolution ran as follows: "We hereby express our fealty to our King-Emperor" etc. (In those days all political meetings opened with a resolution of this sort).

Gandhiji read the resolution and tore it up. "It would be vulgar to pass such a resolution," he said. "So long as we do not rebel, we must be taken to be loyal. There is no need to shout it from the housetops. Does a woman go about advertising her faithfulness to her husband? She has married him, which means that she has promised to be faithful to him."

The workers had nothing left to say. Bapu looked at their downcast faces and said reassuringly: "If any questions are asked as to why no loyalty resolution was brought before the Conference, tell them frankly, by all means, that it was all Gandhi's doing."

12

The Godhra Conference passed a resolution (concerning Viramgam customs if I am not mistaken), which Gandhiji, in his capacity as President, had to send to the Viceroy. Gandhiji immediately drafted out a telegram, and under his own signature added the words *Adhyaksha, Gujarat Rajakiya Parishad.* I said, " How will the poor Viceroy understand these Indian words — *Adhyaksha, Gujarat Rajakiya Parishad* (President, Gujarat Political Conference) ? " "Well," retorted Bapu, "that is his look out. If these people want to rule here, they must take the trouble to learn our language at least to this extent, or keep an interpreter who will explain things to them. After all, they are here in their own interests, aren't they ? "

So the wire went as it was, and the answer, when it arrived, was also quite correct and proper.

13

Mahadev-bhai Desai came to Gandhiji just a few days before the Godhra Conference. An intimate friend of his, Shri Narahari Parikh, had already joined the Ashram National School. The two friends had collaborated in translating a couple of Ravi-babu's Bengali poems into Gujarati.

Mahadev-bhai has passed his LL.B., but was not practising Law. He had worked for a few days in the Oriental Translator's Office, Bombay. After that he was made Inspector of Co-operative Societies on Sir Lalloobhai Samaldas's recommendation. Then he

worked for a while as somebody's private secretary. And then being attracted towards Bapu, he came to Godhra to meet him. He said, "I can work as your secretary, if you will keep me with you." He showed Bapuji a speech in English which he had prepared and written out for his former boss. His hand-writing was certainly beautiful. There was the lustre of purity on his youthful countenance. His interview with Bapuji must have lasted about ten or fifteen minutes.

I have no idea whether Bapu was impressed by that talk, or whether he divined the fineness of Mahadevbhai's unusual character. Be the cause what it may, he said then and there, "You can come along with me." Mahadev-bhai promised to dedicate twenty years of his life to Bapu, and it was as though two souls were wedded in that moment. Mahadev-bhai asked, "When shall I begin work?" "You have already begun it," replied Bapu. "You start with me on my travels from here." Mahadev-bhai hesitated a bit. "Would it not be better if I just went home for a few days first?" "Not at all necessary," returned Bapu promptly. "All that can be done later."

A few days after, Mahadev-bhai and I sat chatting together. He said, "Bapuji went to meet somebody one day. He took a chair, I sat down reverentially on the floor. 'This won't do,' said Bapu. 'Sit on a chair, as I have done.' But I had not the courage. Whereupon he said sternly, 'You must learn the manners of the times. Get up, and sit on this chair.' I was horribly embarrassed, but I got up and did as I was bidden."

I laughed teasingly and said, "Exactly like a docile bride! What?"

We returned to the Ashram from Godhra. Bapu was on tour somewhere: he also returned in a few days. There was no spare room for him in the Ashram. We were all living in huts made of bamboo matting, which afforded protection neither from sun nor from rain. A *pukka* building had been set up to house our weaving department, and a corner-room in that building was emptied for Bapu's use and put at his disposal. As for poor Mahadev-bhai, he had to make shift with what he could get. All his luggage lay in the weaving-house, and he "hung out' wherever he could. One day a wind came and blew away his *Modern Review*. After that we were compelled to make some arrangement for him in our own huts.

It was evening. We were all gathered together for prayer. Bapuji asked Mahadev-bhai for a letter which he had received from someone. Mahadev-bhai, unfortunately, had torn it up and flung it in the waste-paper basket. He rose at once, and started hunting in the basket for the torn bits. It was no joke finding them! Bapu said, "Let it go. I can manage without it." But Mahadev-bhai was not to be beaten so easily. He over-turned the basket on the ground, and carefully picked out each bit of that letter. Bapu was really annoyed. He said, "What on earth are you doing, Mahadev? People have come for prayers, and the prayers are held up because of you. I tell you I can manage without it." Mahadev-bhai took no notice whatever; he started putting the bits together in their proper places. His brow was wet with perspiration. Finally the whole letter was pieced

together and a copy made. And then Mahadev-bhai came and joined in our prayers.

This was Mahadev-bhai's standard of stern efficiency and unswerving loyalty, and he maintained it till his last breath.

15

Our Ashram was started on the bank of the river Sabarmati, near a village called Nava Wadaj. We began by living in tents. Huts were built a little later on. The news of our settling in the Ashram premises reached the thieves round about. They began their nocturnal visits to the Ashram. Respectable visitors often leave gifts for their hosts, but thieves follow a contrary convention. They come empty-handed and grab whatever suits them, on the principle that it is more blessed to grab than to give. This however, did not suit us, so we started keeping watch at night. From 1 a.m. to 3 a.m. was usually my time for playing sentry. The body felt refreshed after its sleep in the first hours of the night, and the solemn peace of the later hours was excellent for meditation. I used to recite *mantras* (sacred texts) from the *Upanishads* as I made my rounds of the Ashram precincts.

A few days later Bapu returned from his tour. He took up the subject of the thieves for our after-prayer discussion. The matter was well and truly discussed. Then Bapu said, " If Maganlal (Gandhiji's nephew, and manager of the Ashram) so desires, I can get him a licence from the Government and buy him a gun. And if people start criticizing him, or swearing at

us for keeping a gun while we pretend to be lovers of *ahimsa* — well, I am here to answer them." This again aroused discussion. Bapu said, "To my mind it is much better that we keep a gun here for our protection, than that we, — all of us, men, women and children, — go quaking and shivering in fear of our lives all the time. One who is obsessed by fear can never be non-violent. It is better to frighten the thieves away than to indulge in futile mental violence against them."

We were asked to give our opinion about this proposal. I spoke against our keeping a gun. Every one was surprised. "This Maharashtri, setting up to be more non-violent than Bapu himself!" That is what I sensed in their attitude. "I am not now speaking as an upholder of *ahimsa*," I explained, "my reasons for opposing this suggestion are quite different. My point is, that today Bapuji is *persona grata* with the Government. The Government regards him as its friend and well-wisher. So we are in a position to get not one but four rifles, if we choose. But where are the millions of Indian peasants to get such weapons from? After all, our peasants have to protect themselves without the help of fire-arms, so why shouldn't we?"

Bapu must have agreed with me, because the matter was dropped there.

Later on Government asked Bapu to help them in their war effort, and Bapu toured the Kheda District enlisting recruits for the army. Then he entered into correspondence with the Government, and succeeded in getting a large number of gun-licences for the Kheda peasants. The day I heard of this I was a happy man.

Several workers from Gujarat came and joined Bapuji when he settled in that province, the most prominent amongst them being Shri Shankarlal Banker and Shri Vallabh-bhai Patel. Shri Viththal-bhai Patel, too, had come to Gandhiji from the very beginning, but had not come into very close contact with him.

At the time of the first Gujarat Rajakiya Parishad (Gujarat Political Conference) in Godhra, Shri Thakkarbapa, — who, being a senior member of the Servants of India Society, had come into frequent contact with Gandhiji, and from the very first become intimate with him, — arranged an Anti-untouchability Conference there also. Bapu said, " The Anti-untouchability Conference can only be held in the *dhed-wada* (colony of untouchables) here." The matter was settled and announced in the Rajakiya Parishad itself, along with the date, time and place of the Conference. Every one was invited, and many attended. The Conference afforded a good excuse for a thorough cleaning-up of the *dhed-wadas*. Shri Viththal-bhai Patel came to the Conference too. Having a keen sense of drollery, he came most excellently dressed for the occasion in a *sadhu's lungi*, long *kurta*, and *kantop* (a combination of cap, hood and muffler). There was no platform; so Gandhiji, in his capacity as President, stood up on a chair to speak. Shri Viththalbhai stood, also, to lend Gandhiji the support of his shoulder. Placing his hand on Viththalbhai's shoulder Gandhiji said, " I am not going to allow myself to be impressed by your outer vestments. You

are allowing me to put my hand on your shoulder, but my hand will go further, mind, and search your heart too!"

Shri Viththal Ramji Shinde, the first and finest helper of the Harijans in Maharashtra, attended that meeting also. He and I were acquainted with each other, so we started chatting together after the meeting. Said Shinde-ji, "I doubt if your Gandhiji will leave any foot-hold for us here. I have been wanting to exchange views with him for such a long time. I want to lay my experience before him — but who has ears for such as I? He desires to speed up the work, wants to form a group of his own. And he has such power and energy for the work, that we cannot have any complaint to make, either. Anyway, there is no place for me here. I am off."

That same Conference decided that an Ashram should be opened in Godhra for Harijan service.

The Ashram was opened, but the right kind of manager was lacking. I persuaded my friend, Mama-saheb Phadke, to take up the work. (He had joined Bapu's Ashram before I did.)

From that day to this Mama-saheb has stuck to his work in Godhra. If any one has a right to be called a *tapaswi* (one who subjects himself to stern spiritual discipline), it is Mama-saheb Phadke.

17

Shankarlal Banker and Mamasaheb have both told me, at various times, of their first meeting with Gandhiji.

Shankarlalji's account runs as follows:

"We were doing political work in Bombay. We were studying in the Wilson College, but whenever there was any mischief we were sure to be in it." (Shankarlal Banker and Jivatram Kripalani were contemporaries in the Wilson College, and rows and rumpuses in college had frequently flung them together.) "Omar Sobhani and I had done a lot of work for the Home Rule League. One day we heard that a man called Gandhi had come to India, and was out to do something big. 'Let us see how far we can exploit him' we thought, and went to see him.

"Gandhiji was sitting on the ground. We went and perched on chairs. Ah, how patronizingly we talked to him! But when we returned, we found that we had been strangely impressed by him. In those days Bombay politics were in our hands. The Government had interned (in Gandhiji's words 'buried') Mrs. Besant. I wrote a letter to Gandhiji to which he replied, 'When grief or injustice cannot be endured, Satyagraha is the only cure for it.' I published this letter of Gandhiji's and started quite a strong movement against the internment. Gandhiji helped and encouraged me. Result — release of Annie Besant!

"Then came the Rowlatt Act movement, and Omar Sobhani and I came under Gandhiji's leadership. The Satyagraha Sabha was formed. Gandhiji's book, *Hind Swaraj*, had already been banned by the Government — while he was still in South Africa, as a matter of fact. So I got thousands of copies printed, and started selling them openly in the streets of Bombay. They sold like hot cakes and at fancy prices.

"The Government of Bombay realized that repression would prove futile, and made a lightning change in its tactics. An announcement was made to the effect that 'the *Hind Swaraj* that had been published in Durban, South Africa, in the Phoenix Press, had been proscribed by Government, but no action would be taken if it was re-printed.' I nearly danced with joy! Then Sobhani said, 'We set forth to exploit that old man, but it is he who has caught us in his toils!'

"It is literally true. Sobhani has been so well and truly caught that all his 'mischievous politics' has vanished into thin air, and he is now heart and soul absorbed in the work of *khadi*."

18

I once invited Shri Vallabh-bhai to the Vidyapith to lecture to the students. A reminiscent mood came over him, and he spoke of past events. He said:

"After my return from England I occupied myself with my practice and the earning of money. I used to study the politics of the country, but I saw no leader who was capable of helping us to attain our goal. All our leaders were more ready with the tongue than with action, so they failed to interest me. I spent my evenings in the Barristers' Club playing cards. Smoking cigars and cigarettes was my only joy. If a speaker turned up to lecture to us, I enjoyed poking fun at him.

"One day Gandhiji came to our Club. I had read about him, of course. I listened to his lecture with my usual scoffing indifference. He talked, I

smoked! But at last I realized that that man was not a mere windbag — he was out for action. So I became interested in him, and made it a point to meet him whenever I could. I was not concerned with his principles, or with *himsa* (violence) and *ahimsa* (non-violence). All that mattered to me was that he was sincere, that he had dedicated his whole life and all he had, to the cause he served, that he was possessed with a desire to free his country from bondage, and that he knew his job thoroughly. I wanted nothing more.

"We started the 'no tax' campaign in the Kheda District. The Gujarat Sabha was not inclined to take up this work. Gandhiji formed a Satyagraha Sabha in the Ashram and went ahead. From that day to this my services have been dedicated to Gandhiji, and I have known no other master. People sneer at me for being a 'blind follower'; but I don't care. When I accepted his leadership, I was perfectly aware that following him would be no joke — that a time might come when people would spit in my face and I would have to endure it without one word of complaint. I have never regretted my action. Gandhiji leads the way, and I just follow with full faith and trust in his wisdom."

19

At the time that Bapu came to India and started work here, he was held in high regard by the Government of India. He was even awarded the Kaisar-i-Hind medal! When the medal came to the Ashram, I took it in my hand to examine it properly. It was

a thick thing of gold, in shape rather like an egg that had been flattened on both sides. I said, "Bapu, you have given a lot of help to the Empire, and your loyalty has won you this medal. I am afraid the Government are out to lure you into their net." Bapu laughed. "Oh, you too believe that, do you?" he asked.

I did not know then that the Kaiser-i-Hind medal was awarded for humanitarian service only. Bapu explained this to me. I said again, "It is certainly very valuable. You will probably sell it as usual and use the proceeds for national activities. You have done that with lots of things." "No," said Bapu briefly, "I am not thinking of selling it. Let it lie here."

We forgot all about the medal, and Bapu went off to Champaran to look into the troubles of the Champaran peasantry. The Bihar Government ordered him to leave the province. Bapu replied, "I am here to serve my countrymen. I cannot leave this place." Along with this reply, he sent a letter to the Ashram saying "The medal awarded to me by the Government is lying in the Ashram. Return it immediately to the Viceroy. I cannot keep it, since my services are not appreciated."

This alertness of Bapu, which in Buddhist terminology is called *smriti* (constant awareness), astonished me.

20

I am reminded of another incident of the same sort, which might as well be recorded here.

In 1921 or '22 Bapu was given six years' imprisonment and kept in Yeravda Jail. Within two years

he got appendicitis there, and Government removed him to the Sassoon Hospital for an operation. He was a prisoner of course, but he was allowed to have visitors. I had just gone to Poona after my year in prison, and I went to see him. What was my astonishment when I saw him lying on his bed clad not only in hospital garb, but in hospital garb made of foreign cloth! I made enquiries about this. and discovered that Bapu had decided to observe all the jail rules this time. It was the rule of the hospital that patients should not wear their own clothes. They could only wear clothes provided by the hospital.

The operation was performed. It left Bapu very weak. We passed some days in great anxiety. One day Colonel Madock came to Bapu and said, "I have great pleasure in informing you that I have just received an order for your release. Now you may stay here or go, as you choose. But as a medical man my advice to you is to stay here for a few more days." Bapu probably said something in acceptance of this advice. But in the same breath he said urgently to someone, "Take off these clothes, and bring me my own. I cannot now bear these clothes a moment longer."

I doubt if Bapu could have felt more upset if the clothes he had been forced to wear had been woven of thorns. It was only when he had put on his beloved *khadi* clothes that he felt equal to speaking to anybody.

The whole of India had come to know th Bapu ate nothing but fruit. The Hindus include milk in their 'fruitarian' diet, but Bapu opposed this most strongly. He not only denied that milk was 'fruitarian', but asserted that it was purely 'animal'. It is the essence of blood, flesh, marrow etc. How, then, can it be considered 'fruitarian'? Milk, as diet, may not involve violence, but it is certainly 'animal'.

On one occasion Bapu had to go to Calcutta, and he stayed as a guest at Shri Bhupendranath Basu's. The Bengalis, as every one knows, are famous for their hospitality. Bapu's host gathered together all the fruit that could be found, dried as well as fresh, and had prepared every possible fruit-dish that could be thought of. The feast was then spread before Bapu. Bapu was appalled. He protested, "Oh, what have you done? I love simplicity, and what an amount of trouble you have taken for my sake!" The thing so upset him that he immediately took a vow to eat only five natural ingredients a day.

This aroused keen discussion amongst us. Should lemons, oranges and *mosambis* be regarded as the same thing, or different things? Should *gur* (treacle), *misri* (sugarcandy) and plain sugar be regarded as the same thing or not? Many such questions arose. Bapu took a very keen interest in such discussions, and carried them right up to the hair-splitting stage with the untiring enthusiasm of a law-giver.

After this we had to remember what he had eaten in the morning in order to decide what he should

eat in the evening. Bapu tried to make things as easy for us as possible, adjusting his diet to the exigencies of the situation. One of his rules was to finish his meal before sunset. To prevent his meal times from overlapping or clashing with his evening functions was a regular headache for every one concerned.

A few days' experience was sufficient to convince Bapu that India was not South Africa. Fruit was not so plentiful here. In South Africa you could gorge yourself with bananas, pineapples, apples, oranges and other fruits of various kinds, with *chilguza* nuts thrown in for good measure. Bapu was no mean trencherman, and when he found that he could not get a sufficiency of fruits in India, he started taking roasted ground nuts along with him whereever he went. He drank coconut milk whenever he could get it. Finally, however, he came to the conclusion that grain was an indispensable part of the Indian diet ; so he relaxed his rule so far as to include rice, bread or *khichdi* (rice and *dal* cooked together) in his menu. He soon discovered that he would have to take salt if he took grains, so he took salt also.

He had to walk a tremendous lot during his recruiting tour in the Kheda District, and for food, he had to make shift with what he could get. It disagreed with him most violently, and he fell very ill. One night he got such acute abdominal pain that he seriously believed his last hour had struck. His youngest son, Devadas, was coming to Sabarmati from Madras the next day. That whole night was spent by Bapu in repeating a verse from the second chapter of the *Gita*, which in English means : " The man who sheds all longing and moves without concern, free

from the sense of "I" and "Mine"—he attains peace." (chap. 2.71.) The next morning as he related his previous night's experience to us, he said, "Had I died then, I would have gone taking one desire with me—to welcome Devadas on his arrival here. How terrible it would be for the lad, I thought, to come here and find me gone! If I could only live on until he came, the shock would be somewhat softened for him."

That verse from the *Gita* gave him peace and strength to live through the night.

In the morning he sent for us teachers, and many of us thought he wanted to speak to each one of us in private. My colleagues sent me in first, and I slipped into his room and sat quietly down near him. "Call every one in," ordered Bapu. When we were all gathered around him he recounted his experience of the previous night and said, "I am not at all sure that my body will survive this attack. I entrust to you my last message to India, which is this: 'The salvation of India can come through *ahimsa* (non-violence) alone, and India can save the world by *ahimsa*.'" And then he fell silent. We had expected him to say something about the Ashram, to speak a few words at least to each one of us separately; but he said nothing at all, just became engrossed in repeating that same verse from the *Gita*. We sat there for a long, long while, waiting. Finally we quitted the room and went our several ways.

His illness grew worse day by day, and so did our anxiety. But relief came to us in an unexpected way. The Government published their draft of the Rowlatt Bill, and lo! Gandhiji's will to live was galvanized into action! He said, "Had I been well

and strong, I would have gone round the country rousing the people to the sense of their danger. Is this the reward we get for helping the Government in its war effort — this Rowlatt Act!"

A few national workers came from Bombay and Maharashtra to confer with Gandhiji. Bapuji had a list made of all those who were prepared to oppose the Rowlatt Act to the last, and to go to any length to have it repealed. His idea was to guide and advise such people from his bed of sickness. But the urgency and importance of the crisis acted as an elixir, and behold! he was soon well and whole again. He arose, and himself led the movement against the Rowlatt Act.

22

Bapu was living in Maganlal-bhai's house which means that the following incident took place after Maganlal-bhai's death. Just as Bapu had to deal with public problems of national importance, so also did he have to deal with the private and domestic problems of his countless friends. I should not be surprised if he was even more successful in solving such delicate private problems than he was in solving public ones, and, to my mind, the national service that he was able to perform through such delicate work was even more important than his public activities.

There was a young man, belonging to a family which was known to Bapu, who had been engaged to be married. But no sooner were the bride's people able to congratulate themselves on having settled their girl in life than the groom started making

a fuss and saying "I do not want to marry this girl." People tried to plead with him, to persuade him, to bring him round to a better frame of mind. All in vain. He had dug in his feet like a mule, and refused to budge. Finally, exhausted and despairing, the bride's people came to Bapu to beg him to see what he could do. They were very diffident, poor creatures, because they realized how valuable the time and energy of such a great man was. But necessity knows neither law nor manners. Well — the long and short of it was that Bapu sent for the boy and talked with him. The girl's people sat there listening to the conversation. For three whole days consecutively did Bapu wear himself out trying to talk sense into that young idiot, while the prospective in-laws sat watching and listening and, presumably, drawing their own conclusions.

On the third day some work took me to Bapu. The boy was talking loudly about his sorrows and difficulties. "My father," he was complaining, "wants me to work five whole hours daily in his shop! I ask you, Bapu, is it possible for a modern young man to work for more than a couple of hours a day? Oh, how can I tell you how worried I am?...." etc. etc.

Bapu listened to all this with unruffled tranquility and finally, somehow or other succeeded in wringing from the boy a promise that he would go on with the marriage. The girl's people heaved long sighs of relief.

But Bapu's face suddenly clouded over, and he became very grave. He sent the boy out of the room and turned to the girl's people. "You have seen this boy at close quarters for three whole days," he said, "you have seen with what difficulty I got him

to consent to this marriage. And now, I ask you in all earnestness, do you still desire to give your girl to this man ?"

I was watching the leader of the girl's party. He seemed to be quite dazed and bewildered. He could say neither yea nor nay. And Bapu kept his piercing gaze fixed upon him. One could see a confusion of thoughts racing in the man's mind. At last, having weighed the pros and cons, he said brokenly, "Mahatmaji, you are quite right. We are no longer eager." Bapu immediately called the boy in and said, "I do not want to lay a burden upon you. I have talked to these people. You are freed from your engagement. You may go."

The boy departed. The girl's party rose to go. Bapu turned to me and, without giving me a chance to state my business, said, "Kaka, I have done a bit of cow-protecting today! When I talk of cow-protection, it is not only of four-legged cows that I think. God alone knows what we were letting that poor girl in for. A great and very blessed work has been done today."

Having said this, Bapuji gave his undivided attention to my work. But the expression of deep content lingered long upon his countenance.

23

Bapu had a very soft corner in his heart for the downtrodden people of Bihar and Orissa. The Biharis are a simple, faithful folk, not enlightened enough to emancipate their women from the terrible bondage of *purdah* which still obtains amongst them. Some Bihari friends wrote to Bapu, saying they

wanted to rid their province of the *purdah* system, and would he please send a woman worker to help them? Bapu had very great faith in his *ashramites*, so he chose an Ashram girl for the work. She was the daughter of Maganlal-bhai, his nephew and manager of the Ashram and her name was Radha. She was young, but she went with full faith in Bapu and a commendable confidence in herself. Some time passed, and then Maganlal-bhai went to Bihar to meet his daughter. He never returned from that visit — he fell ill and died there. The news of his passing away came as a thunder-bolt upon the Ashram: we were all stunned and dazed. I remember how I got the news. I was sitting in my own house when someone came running and gasped out, "Have you heard about Maganlal-bhai? He is dead!" I rushed to Bapu's cottage; he was not there. I was told that the moment Bapu got the wire he went to Maganlal-bhai's house....I followed him there, to that desolate abode — and, I could not help it, I broke into tears. Now, this was a Monday, Bapu's day of silence. But, seeing my uncontrollable distress, he broke his silence and comforted me. And he called Maganlal-bhai's children, and made them sit near him....At last I rose to go. Bapu said, "When I took the vow of silent Mondays, I allowed myself two exceptions. I decided that in a moment of unendurable physical pain, or to comfort someone in equal mental pain, I would break my silence and say what was necessary. This is the first time in all these years that I have had to take advantage of the exception."

Bapu had hastened to Maganlal-bhai's house in order to comfort his widow and children. Their need of his peace-giving presence and support was so great,

that he never returned to his own hut at all so long as he remained in Sabarmati. He sent for all he needed and settled down in Maganlal-bhai's house. Not for a moment did he allow that grief-stricken family to feel that it was orphaned and had no one to turn to in its hour of need.

When I went to see him again he was sitting in his new quarters with all his paraphernalia around him, writing an article for the *Young India*. He was writing something to this effect: "As I write, the sobs of Maganlal's widow fall upon my ears.... ... Little does she know that I have been widowed likewise......" Yes! And who was to comfort him, whose task it was to comfort us all?

24

The Sabarmati Ashram was still a new venture, when the peace of Ahmedabad was rudely broken and Bapu found himself faced with a new problem. It was a tug-of-war between the mill-owners, headed by Shri Ambalal Sarabhai, on the one hand, and the mill-workers' Union, created and led by Shree Anasuya-behn on the other. The fact that Anasuya-behn was Ambalalbhai's own sister lent a peculiar piquancy to the situation. It was the old old story—a demand for increased wages on the part of the workers, a reluctance to disturb the *status quo* on the part of the owners. Both Ambalal-bhai and Anasuya-behn had faith in Gandhiji. Gandhiji had an affection for both Anasuya-behn and Ambalal-bhai. All efforts to bring about a mutual understanding between the two parties failed, and finally the workers had to resort to Satyagraha. Gandhiji made the mill-workers take

a vow that they would not return to work until their wages had been increased by 35 per cent. But how were all these workers to be fed during the Satyagraha period? That was the problem worrying Anasuya-behn. She must have spent nearly ten thousand rupees as it was. When Bapu heard of this he said, "You are going about things in the wrong way. How long can your purse bear this strain? The mill-owners are not going to give in so easily. And once they come to know that the workers are fighting on the strength of your money, good-bye to all hopes of a settlement! As for the workers, you will turn them into your crippled and helpless dependents. Satyagraha is no joke. It is a trial by fire. No, the workers must stand on their own feet and fight."

This was all very true and proper. But how long could poor people go on doing Satyagraha on empty stomachs? Satyagraha was a novel weapon in those days, both for the workers and the country at large. A few days, and the mill-workers began to weaken. They decided to throw in their hand and go back to work. Bapu could not stand that at any price. The workers must be stiffened in their resolution. They must be roused to feel that they would die starving, rather than break their vow. "They will have to be taught how to starve, and I can only do that by starving with them," decided Bapu.

The mill-workers were all assembled together, and Bapu spoke to them, explaining many things. He said, "You must stick to your vow until you get your 35 per cent increase. I cannot bear you to own defeat. You took that vow keeping me as witness. Therefore, I now vow that until your terms are

accepted I, too, will allow no food to pass my lips." This had a lightning effect upon the workers — they were galvanized into new life. Every evening Bapu would set forth from the Ashram and walk five or six miles to the streets of the mill-workers, and there explain to them the importance of keeping vows and of behaving non-violently. And every day he issued a fresh printed pamphlet to be read by them.

The moment we heard of Bapu's fast, Mahadev-bhai and I decided to fast likewise. How could we eat while Bapu went hungry? Mahadev-bhai told Bapu of his decision. Bapu forbade him to do any such thing. Mahadev-bhai persisted. There was no time for discussion or argument. Bapu said, sternly, "See here, Mahadev, I know what your duty is. Go, and eat. If you do not eat, I will never see your face again."

Poor Mahadev came away from that interview with a downcast face. He said, "How shall I live if Bapu refuses to see my face?" I said, "After all, we have made Bapu our conscience. If he says we should eat, then we should eat. That is our test and trial."

My name, too, had reached Bapu's ears in this connection. I went to him and started to explain: "Mahadev has told me everything. We have both decided to eat. I will take nothing but dates and water, but that has nothing to do with fasting. That is my own independent experiment." He answered at once, "Yes, certainly. You can try your own experiment."

What I said was perfectly true. I was thinking of trying such an experiment. I was afraid Bapu might think that I had thought out this devious

method of getting my own way. But Bapu never indulged in such doubts. He gave me his permission without any mental reservations, which was a great blessing for me.

We were thus easily disposed of, but another problem arose. Anasuya-behn began to feel very uneasy. "It was I who drew Bapu into this business. If he fasts, I too must fast." The mill-workers heard of this, and were simply distracted. Anasuya-behn had come to the Ashram. A Mussulman mill-worker turned up there and said to her: "Mahatmaji is Mahatmaji. We can endure his fasting. But we simply would not be able to stand it if you too start fasting. It will drive me out of my senses, and I tell you frankly, I shall not be responsible for my actions. I might even go and murder one of these mill-owners." Here we were, landed with a third problem. Bapu said to Anasuya-behn, "It is not your duty to fast." At prayer time he made his wishes clear to us all. "If you all start fasting with me my strength will in no way be increased thereby. On the contrary, I shall be worrying about you. Your duty, therefore, is to take proper nourishment so that you may be fit to help me in my work. If my body drop from me in the course of this fast, you must refrain from futile lamentation ; — on the contrary, if there is ever a place in the Ashram diet for sweets, you must make sweets and eat them on that particular day. But if you, my colleagues and companions, begin to fast with me my whole work will be spoilt, and I shall never be able to undertake a fast with a free mind again."

How long this Satyagraha continued, how it ended, and how (as Bapu put it) "both sides won"

need not be recounted here. Mahadev-bhai, in his book, *Eka Dharmayuddha,** has given a full and most interesting account of this historic struggle.

25

It must have been in 1926. Bapu was touring South India, working for *khadi*. The Tamilnad tour had ended, and we were travelling about in Andhra by car. We reached Chikakol at about 10 p.m., and found that the local workers had organized a spinning competition between the best women spinners there in Bapu's honour. (Chikakol *khadi* is famous throughout the length and breadth of India for its remarkable fineness and beauty.) We were dead tired with all this night and day travelling in motor-car, and in no mood for any programmes or competitions. Mahadevbhai and I thought, "Poor Bapu cannot avoid attending this competition, but why should not we? It will make no difference to anybody whether we go or not. Much better to snatch a little sleep when one can." So Mahadev-bhai and I went off to our sleeping places and fell fast asleep. Bapuji's bed had been prepared for him — we never knew when he came or how he slept.

We rose at 4 a.m. for prayers. We washed our faces and were just beginning the prayer when Bapu asked, "Did you say your prayer before sleeping last night?" I replied, "I was so tired when I came to bed that I just went off to sleep, clean forgetting my

---

* Originally written in Gujarati, the book is available in Hindi and Marathi translations also. All the three are published by the Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad.

prayers. I remember it only now, when you ask us about it."

Mahadevbhai said, "It was the same with me, but just as I was dropping off I remembered that we had not prayed, so I sat up in bed and rectified the omission. I did not wake Kaka, though."

Then Bapu said, with indescribable pathos, "I sat for an hour or so in the competition, and when I returned I was so tired that I, too, forgot all about prayer and went to sleep. Then at about two o'clock, I woke up, and it flashed upon me that I had not said my nightly prayers. I felt such agony that my body was seized with a fit of trembling and I became all wet with perspiration. I sat up in bed, and was plunged in a remorse beyond all description. How could I forget Him by whose mercy I live, who strengthens me in all my efforts? How could I forget that *Bhagavan*? I could not get over my own carelessness. I could not sleep a wink after that. All night I sat up in bed, repenting my mistake and begging His forgiveness."

He fell silent, and it may be imagined with what feelings we said our morning prayers that day. Mahadev-bhai sang a *bhajan*. Then Bapu said, "Even while travelling we must have a fixed time for our evening prayers. We make a mistake in leaving our prayers till we have finished all our work and are preparing to go to bed. From today, we pray punctually at seven o'clock in the evening, no matter where we may happen to be."

We were still journeying by car. Every evening at seven o'clock we would stop the car, and, whether we were in a forest or in a town, we would say our prayers without fail at the appointed time.

A small biography of Lokamanya Tilak by Shri Apte Guruji of National Education fame has recently been published. Its attraction has been enhanced by a preface from the pen of Shri Mavalankar, Speaker of the Bombay Legislative Assembly in which the following incident occurs:

The Congress Provincial Conference was meeting in Ahmedabad in 1916. In those days this Conference was run by the moderates, although all the work of the Conference was done by the young men of the day. Mr. Jinnah was its president, and there was going to be a procession in his honour. The Reception Committee had sent an invitation to Lokamanya Tilak, which he had accepted. The young men wanted to have a procession in his honour also, but the men on top were rather unwilling—Lokamanya being a staunch and uncompromising nationalist. They argued that if they had a procession for Lokamanya, they must have processions for all the other leaders. Well, the result was, that the Conference could not arrange a public welcome for Lokamanya and the young men were deeply disappointed.

Gandhiji had not yet entered the political arena, nor had he become a *Mahatma.* In fact, he was not even a member of the Conference. When he heard that there was going to be no public welcome for Lokamanya, he had a leaflet printed under his own signature and distributed thousands of copies to the citizens of Ahmedabad. It said nothing more than this: 'We are being honoured by the visit of such a great leader as Lokamanya, so I am going to the

station to receive him. It is the duty of the citizens of Ahmedabad to be present there to welcome him also.'

This leaflet had a magical effect. There were tremendous crowds both at the station and on the roads, and Lokamanya was given a most magnificent welcome.

27

It was in the first days of the Ashram when we were still permitted to sit up till late at night chatting with Bapu.

We sat up talking till very late one night, and mention was made of Lokamanya. Bapu said, "If there is any man who meditates night and day, with untiring fervour, on how to achieve freedom for India, it is he." He paused a moment, then continued, "I am perfectly sure that if Lokamanya is not asleep at this moment, he must be thinking of something or the other in connection with Swaraj, or he must be discussing that particular topic with someone. His loyalty to the ideal of Swaraj is something wonderful."

28

It was the 31st of July, 1920. Hearing that Lokamanya's illness had taken a serious turn, I had gone to Bombay. I went to the *Sardar-griha* to see Lokamanya. It was not easy, because those were practically his last moments, and people were not allowed to go in. However, I managed to get permission and went

in. He was breathing very hard, and all the most prominent doctors of Bombay were gathered around his bed. I could not remain in that room for long. My feelings overcame me, and I went away and joined the Maharashtri leaders who were sitting in silent grief in another room. Seeing my distress, Shri Bapuji Aney called me to him, and started discussing the policy of non-co-operation.

I left by the evening train for Ahmedabad. All I said to Bapu was, "I have seen the Lokamanya, now I am returning to the Ashram."

That same night Lokamanya quitted his earthly shell. The first words that Bapu uttered when he heard the news on the telephone were "Oh, what a pity! I wish I had kept Kaka back."

After that he remained plunged in solemn thought. He spent the whole night sitting on his cot thinking. A lamp was burning by his side. He let it shine, and remained with his eyes fixed upon it, lost in thought.

Mahadev-bhai awoke from sleep in the latter part of the night and saw Bapu sitting up motionless, in a very trance of thought. He went to Bapu, and Bapu spoke almost involuntarily, as it were: "To whom shall I go for advice now in moments of difficulty? And when the time comes to seek help from the whole of Maharashtra, to whom shall I turn?" He fell silent, then spoke again, "I have been working for Swaraj all along, but I have avoided uttering that word. But now, it is up to me to keep Lokamanya's slogan alive and effective, it must not be allowed to sink into silence. And the banner of Swaraj which this brave warrior had raised must not be lowered for a moment."

Bapu joined Lokamanya's funeral procession that day, and lent his shoulder to the bier. But he was grieved that the crowds were not as silent and serious as they should have been on that solemn occasion. He felt it very deeply. However, later on, he saw the thing from another angle and was comforted. When he returned to Ahmedabad and gave us his post-prayer talk, he said, describing the whole incident, "After all, that vast crowd had not gathered there to mourn. It was there to offer homage to its great leader. How then could we expect from it the solemn dignity of grief ?"

29

It was in 1926. Bapu was touring South India in connection with *khadi* work, in accordance with Shri Rajagopalachari's arrangements. In the course of our travels we came to a place near Shimoga, and near, also, to the Girsappa Falls. Rajaji had very thoughtfully provided all facilities for a visit to that famous spot, which was about ten or twelve miles away. The party was quite a large one, and included Rajaji and his son and daughter, Devadas, Gangadharrao Deshpande, Manibehn (daughter of Vallabhbhai), myself and several others, all eager for the trip. I begged Bapu to come too. He did not seem inclined. I said, "Look at Lord Curzon ! When he came to India, the first chance he got, off he went to pay a call on Girsappa ! It is worth seeing, Bapu. The highest waterfall in the world........" "Higher than the Niagara ?" asked Bapu. Here was a chance to show off my knowledge. "The Niagara is the largest in volume,

but certainly not the highest. We have lots of waterfalls higher than the Niagara. The waters of the Girsappa fall straight down from a height of 960 feet. There is no waterfall in the world as high as this."

I wanted to warm Bapu up, but he cooled me down instead ! Softly he asked, "And what is the height of the rainfall, that drops from the sky ? " I hope I did not look as foolish as I felt. I realized that I was talking to one whose mind was incapable of being shaken by desire. I stopped trying to lure him, but offered another suggestion. "Well, all right. Don't come if you don't feel like it. But do send Mahadev-bhai. He'll never come unless you give him leave." Bapu's reply was prompt, brief and to the point : "Mahadev will not go. I am his Girsappa." I had completely forgotten that this was their *Young India* day. Even in the midst of that whirlwind tour the burden of these two papers, the *Young India* and the *Navajivan*, remained on their shoulders. Had they not written their articles that day, these two papers would have remained matterless and would not have appeared at all. I was annoyed. I said, "You are not coming, and you are not sending Mahadev either. Then what is the use of my going ? " Bapu said very gently, "No, no. You must see Girsappa. It is your duty. You are a teacher, you see. If you go and see it, you will be able to give your students a fine lesson in geography. You simply must go."

Well, I needed no more encouragement than that. From childhood I had been hearing tales of Girsappa, and the longing to see it had grown with the years. And here was my heart's desire presented

to me as a duty by Bapu ! So I saw Girsappa and was content.*

About 15 years after this Bapu sent Mahadev-bhai to Mysore on a mission which necessitated his meeting Sir Mirza Ismail. (Bapu always sent Mahadev-bhai as his emissary when some particularly delicate negotiations were afoot.) Mahadev-bhai started forth. Bapu's parting words to him were : "You are going to Mysore, and your work will keep you there for some time. Nor is there any particular reason for you to hurry back here. So do not miss this chance of seeing Girsappa. I have written to Sir Mirza also. He will make all the necessary arrangements for you."

So Mahadev-bhai went and saw Girsappa and I firmly believe that I was even happier about this than he was. And Bapu, perhaps, was happy too — for had he not made two people happy at one stroke !

30

During the above-mentioned tour we went far South, right up to Nagarkovil, which is not far from Kanyakumari (Comorin). Bapu had visited Kanyakumari on a former occasion, and been deeply impressed by its natural magnificence. On his return to the Ashram he had spoken of it with glowing enthusiasm.

---

* There is a village called 'Girsappa' at the foot of the falls. The falls were named after the village by the British. Their original name, however, was Jog. In ancient Kannad *jog* is the word for 'waterfall'. The Girsappa Falls are the *jog* of the river Sharavati, also known as the Bharangi.

As soon as we reached Nagarkovil Bapu sent for our host and said, "I want to send Kaka to Kanyakumari. Please arrange for a car to take him there." Our host said he would.

But when, after some hours, Bapu saw no signs of my going to Kanyakumari, he called our host again and asked whether arrangements had been made for me or not. This was surprising, from Bapu. Having once entrusted a task to someone, it was not his habit to concern himself further with the matter. This exception to his usual rule made me realize how deeply that spot had impressed him. I had read somewhere that Swami Vivekananda, too, had been filled with emotion when he visited Kanyakumari: he had flung himself into the sea and gone swimming up to a large island rock. "You will come too, will you not, Bapu?" I asked. "No such luck," said Bapu, "I have been once, and must content myself with that." He saw that I was a little grieved at this, so he explained gently, "You see, I have set such a great movement afoot. It is a tremendous responsibility. Thousands of volunteers have dedicated themselves to the service of the country. If I start indulging my love for sight-seeing, they will have every right to do the same — and just consider how the country will suffer. No, self-denial is the only path for me."

I remembered the Girsappa incident, and, besides, I could not but agree with Bapu. "Very well," I said, mollified, "I will take Ba (Mrs. Gandhi) along, and of course Chandrashankar (my secretary) will come too."

So we went. We passed the beautiful temple of Shachindra on the way. There is a shrine dedicated

to *Kumari* (virgin) Parvati, built on the cape of Kanyakumari. We did not go in, because Harijans were not allowed to enter there. But I did not mind. I felt that that whole vast and splendid promontory was itself a temple of Mother India. One sea came rolling in from the east, another from the west, and a third from the south — and all the three seas met there and merged in a miracle of unparalleled beauty and grandeur. The sun rises in one sea and sets in another here, and the eastern and western shores of India become one. This spot is the final goal of pilgrims. . . . I bathed in the sea, and then went and sat on a large rock, and began to chant verses from the *Upanishads* to the grand beat and rhythm of the oceanic waters. And as I chanted, the external splendour of Creation became a background for the internal splendour of Bapu, and I saw that the picture was no less magnificent than its background.

31

Bapu's second son, Manilal, married a little later than the other sons. He lived in South Africa, but he wanted a girl from India. Manilal had entrusted Bapu with the task of finding him a wife. Jamnalalji (Bajaj) being deeply interested in all Bapu's affairs whether great or small, found a girl in the Mashruwala family who seemed suitable. Her name was Sushila, and she was the daughter of Nanabhai Mashruwala of Akola. Bapu expressed immediate approval of Jamnalalji's choice. The wedding took place with due ceremony in Akola, and the Gandhi family started on their homeward way. As soon as

they reached the station Bapu said laughingly, "Manilal, do not sit in our compartment. Find your own place, and take Sushila along with you. Do not miss this fine opportunity of getting to know each other a bit."

Bapuji returned to the Ashram, and at the prayer time he told us all about the wedding.

32

Mahadev-bhai told me this story himself. He was travelling in North India with Bapu. One day Mahadev-bhai had so much to write, that he began in the evening and kept steadily at it till the early hours of the morning. He finished his work and then slept. That morning he simply could not get up at the usual time.

When he awoke, he saw all the paraphernalia of morning tea spread out before him. Bapu had gone to the station waiting room himself, and ordered tea, milk, sugar, bread and butter to be brought to the compartment for his Mahadev! He never drank tea himself, but he knew that Mahadev could not do without it. So he made all the preparations, and then sat patiently waiting for Mahadev to get up. Mahadev got up eventually, saw what Bapu had done, and felt very embarrassed indeed — especially so, because he realized that Bapu knew all about his little weakness for tea. Bapu, divining his feelings, started talking sweetly of this and that, and soon had him completely at ease. After all, the fatigue of the night called for some refreshment in the morning.

33

When the wily Government of Bihar failed in its efforts to get Bapu to leave Champaran, it tried another trick. The Lieut.-Governor and other big-wigs sent for him and said, " We can trust you, Mr. Gandhi, but have you any idea what your colleagues and companions are like? We know them. Unscrupulous fellows, we assure you! "

Those poor officials had no idea that this was the worst possible line to take with Bapu. " You," Bapu retorted promptly, " only know them from a distance; I live with them day and night. Personal experience has convinced me that these people are far better folk than I am. I do not know one amongst them who can be called ' bad '."

The Police Commissioner it was, I think, who said, " Your colleague, Prof. Kripalani, has a very bad record according to our files. He is a thorough mischief-monger. An agitator, if ever there was one."

Bapu burst out laughing. " Do you know," he asked mirthfully, " what Prof. Kripalani is doing at my place? He spends all his time helping Mrs. Gandhi to cook for us all. What mischief do you suppose the poor fellow can make there? "

The Police Commissioner sat with his mouth open, staring at Bapu. Prof. Kripalani, that arch-agitator, that political corrupter of Bihari youth, playing *babaji* (Bihari word for ' cook ') in Gandhiji's kitchen! Incredible!!

Bapuji said, " Come and have a look at him one day. The poor fellow has no time to lift his head from his endless pots and pans."

Then began Bapu's famous Bihar enquiry. Thousands of peasants came to him, pouring their tales of woe into his sympathetic ears, and he was always having to write to the Collector about something or the other. The bearer of these missives to the Collector's bungalow was invariably that ' dangerous fellow ' Kripalani ! One can imagine the bewilderment of the Collector when he saw, with his own eyes, the ' arch-sedition-monger ' trotting about with notes, gaily playing at being Gandhi's *chaprasi* (peon) as well as cook !

34

Bapu was once touring in Maharashtra. There was a short programme arranged for him in Miraj. He disposed of it and started to go. But the people there wanted him to stay a little longer. Bapu said he could not. They pleaded ; he was adamant. So they tried to get their way in a vulgar fashion which is not, unfortunately, uncommon in India. They saw to it that Bapu's motor did not turn up.

Bapu's time was up, and he started feeling uneasy, stickler as he was for strict punctuality. When he asked about his car, they said, " It has gone out of order." Bapu lost his patience. He said, " I must start at once for my next appointment. I cannot stay here a moment longer." And he started walking. Some volunteers accompanied him. " Which is the road to the next place ? " Bapu asked them. They

still had not had their fill of mischief. They showed him the wrong path.

In those days Bapu went barefoot. (Probably this happened during the year after Gokhaleji's death, when Bapu had vowed to go barefoot for a year.) When he saw that there was no path ahead, he walked on through the fields in the same direction. He got thorns in his feet, but did not pause. This was too much even for those coarse-fibred volunteers — they were filled with shame and regret. They begged Bapu's forgiveness, showed him the right way, and sent a couple of men off running, to make arrangements for a car for Bapu.

35

This happened in 1927. I had gone with Bapu to Balasor, in Orissa ; and from there we were to go on to Bhadrak, where arrangements had been made for holding a meeting. Bapu could not go. So he said to me, "You go, Kaka, and deliver my message to the meeting." I got ready to go, and then sat waiting for someone to come and fetch me. No one came. I went on waiting.

This must have gone on for about an hour. Bapu, seeing me still there, asked, "Why have you not gone ? " I said, "I am ready but what can I do ? No one has come to fetch me." Bapu was greatly upset. He said, "This is no way to work. The moment it was time to go, you should have gone. No matter if there was no car — you could have walked. Even if it had taken you two days to reach Bhadrak, it would not have mattered. What we are concerned with is not reaching in time, but starting in time."

I felt very much ashamed of myself, and set out immediately, asking the way to Bhadrak of whomsoever I happened to pass on the road. I went on like that for nearly a mile, and then Shri Harekrishna Mehtab came along. Hearing that I had set forth on foot, he had immediately sent orders for his car, and came walking after me himself. We must have walked nearly another mile before his motor overtook us.

It was almost evening when we reached Bhadrak. The place which had been fixed upon for the meeting was white with the tents of tax-collecting officers. The people were so afraid of them that no one dared to go near. With great trouble we managed to gather a few souls together — villagers from the countryside near by. I spoke to them about courage. I told them that the officials were our servants; it was for them to fear us, not for us to fear them; and so on and so forth. God alone knows what effect my words produced upon them; but I know that the officials were quite annoyed with me.

The next day Bapu himself came to Bhadrak and things started humming. People gathered in their thousands to see and hear him, and those officials vanished into space like rubbish on the seething waters of a river in spate.

36

Bapu's first imprisonment, in India, took place in 1922. He was kept in the Yeravda Jail. Aware of the fact that Bapu was deeply beloved both of Hindus and Muslims, the Jail Superintendent chose for

Bapu's service, a foreigner, a negro convict who, poor fellow, knew no Indian language properly, and therefore was less likely to be 'corrupted' by the influence of this strange and disturbing 'enemy of the Empire'. Bapu and his negro attendant were compelled to make shift with gestures, and the few words which comprised the Hindustani vocabulary of the latter. The 'non-coloured' official felt safe and complacent. No fear of the negro's falling under Gandhi's spell, and losing his heart to him, and becoming his follower! God was in His Heaven and all was well with the world, as far as the Superintendent was concerned. What he forgot was the annoying fact that human hearts are the same all the world over.

One day the negro got stung by a scorpion, and came howling to Bapu, holding an agonized hand. Bapu cannot see any one in pain or trouble, and with him, to feel is to act. Without wasting a moment he washed that part of the negro's hand thoroughly clean with water, dried it, and then started sucking the poison out of the sting. He sucked with such vim and gusto that much of the poison was drawn out, and the poor man began to feel better. Then Bapu applied various other treatments, and the negro got rid of his pain.

Never had that unfortunate wretch received such love from any one in the whole course of his life. He became Bapu's slave. Bapu's slightest gesture became his law. He served Bapu with unflagging zeal and devotion. To please Bapu, he taught himself to spin on the *takli*, and later even on the spinning wheel. He went on from strength to strength. He learnt carding, and made slivers for Bapu. The

unfortunate Superintendent must have felt terribly disturbed, but what on earth was he to do?

37

This happened in 1930, when I was in Yeravda Prison along with Bapu. The Superintendent, Major Martin, had appointed a Maharashtri called Dattoba to cook for Bapu. Dattoba did not really have very much to do: just odd jobs like washing Bapu's clothes, warming up Bapu's goat's milk, and things like that. The poor fellow suffered from pain in his foot, and limped noticeably as he went about his work.

One day Bapu spoke to Major Martin about this. Major Martin gave Dattoba some medicine, but it did no good. A month went by, and then Bapu said to Major Martin, "Have you any objection to my treating this man?" "None whatever," said the Major. Bapu said, "Diet is the most important part of my treatment. I shall provide him with the special things I want him to eat." Major Martin agreed to this also.

Bapu started giving treatment to Dattoba. He began by keeping him on fast for a few days, and cleaned out his stomach with an enema. Then, for a few days, he kept him on nothing but vegetables. Later on, he kept making adjustments in his diet as occasion arose. The lame man began to improve. He said to me, "I have been bothered by this pain for years and now, look, how much better my foot is! I find no difficulty in walking whatever. I find it so surprising — to be able to walk like other men."

Dattoba was released soon after Bapu, and he opened a little shop at Colaba where he sold sweets and tea and coffee. One day he heard that Bapu was in Bombay, so he came along to have his *darshan*. He prostrated himself before Bapu, his eyes brimming with gratitude. Bapu said to me, " Just tell him, will you, that I am very busy today, but he must come to see me tomorrow, without fail." Dattoba promised to come the next day, as asked — and never turned up, the wretch! Bapu's idea was to give him a hundred rupees or so for his little shop. Dattoba never even gave me his address, or I would have hunted him up and brought him along somehow. But to find such a tiny needle in a vast haystack as Bombay was beyond my powers. When he failed to come the next day Bapu felt quite regretful. He said, " I wish I had given him something yesterday, when I had the chance. How can a man who labours for his living find the time to visit me again and again ? "

38

It must have been some time in 1915 that Bapu sat writing one day, and I sat near him reading Fitzgerald's version of Omar Khayyam. I had often heard it praised, but never read it. So, finding a chance to rectify this omission, I took it, and began reading the poem with great enjoyment. I was nearly coming to the end of it when something drew Bapu's attention towards me. " What are you reading ?" he asked. I showed him the book.

We had but just lately become acquainted. Bapu probably did not feel like preaching to me

right off. He heaved a deep sigh, instead, and said with simple pathos, "I, too, used to be very fond of English poetry. But I gave it up. I thought to myself: I do not even know as much Sanskrit as I should. And if I have some time to spare, why should I not utilize it in trying to become a better writer in Gujarati? My job today is to serve India to the best of my ability, so I must dedicate all my time to developing my capacity for service." He paused, then continued in the same simple, meditative fashion, "If I can be said to have really renounced anything for the sake of national service, it is my passion for English literature. Money and career mattered so little to me, that leaving them was no 'renunciation' at all. But oh, how I loved English literature! However, I decided that I must give it up, so I did."

I took the hint. I put Fitzgerald away.

I have not been able to give up English literature completely, but Fitzgerald has remained unfinished to this day. And I think I may say, in a general way, that I read no English book until I had attained a certain amount of proficiency in speaking and writing Gujarati. I never had to make any effort to learn Gujarati although it was not my mother tongue. I just absorbed it from the Gujarati atmosphere around me, and reading Gandhiji's writings did the rest.

When I first started writing in Gujarati, I found a very simple way of dealing with gaps in my Gujarati vocabulary. When I could not find just the right Gujarati word, I substituted for it a simple Sanskrit word. The result was that while my style remained simple and unpretentious, it acquired a Sanskrit

tinge, and became as acceptable to the learned as it was suitable for the unlearned.

The greatest benefit that I derived from Bapu's significant remarks was this, that the energy which I used formerly to spend on finding out and learning all about the right English words, I now diverted to the proper study of the Gujarati language.

39

When I first went to the Ashram I knew neither Gujarati nor Hindi. My ears had become familiar with both these languages, of course, but speaking or writing in them was beyond me. I found it more convenient to teach in Hindi, because there I felt cock of the walk ! I knew little Hindi, but the others knew even less. However, I could not feel sure of my ground even there, and gradually, as my self-confidence grew, I started talking more and more Gujarati. As my Gujarati grew in strength, so did my usefulness. Swami Anand began to make occasional use of me to fill up empty columns in the *Navajivan.* He would make me write, make the necessary corrections, and then sling my articles into print. But when Bapu went to prison in 1922, it was left to me to fill up the columns of the *Navajivan* from the first page to the last.

Bapu must have heard in prison that I was looking after the *Navajivan,* so he sent me a letter one day. He wrote, "Spelling has not been standardized in Gujarati as it has been in English, Marathi, Bengali, Tamil, Urdu and other languages. They all insist on correct spelling ; but not so Gujarati. Gujarati spelling is very lax — any one can spell

anything in any way he pleases, with the result that Gujarati has become a sort of ghost, wandering bodiless through the air, as it were. It must be saved from this evil fate, and if you do not do this, who will? Make a really good Gujarati dictionary for me which will contain all the words in the Gujarati language, spelt correctly according to definite rules. It must be unimpeachable, so that any one who is in doubt as to how to spell a certain word can look it up in your dictionary and go ahead with a free mind. That is what we do with English, do we not?"

I was simply astounded. Later I was arrested and imprisoned. When I came out of jail, and Bapu followed, I said to him, "Bapuji, how could you expect me to do this thing? Gujarati is not my mother-tongue, nor have I studied its literature. As for grammar......"

Bapu cut me short and said, "Now look. Have I said that you are to do the whole thing single-handed? You are at liberty to seek help from whomsoever you choose. Make up your mind as to what you want done, and get it done. I have entrusted this work to you, and I am not going to let you off. So go ahead. Realize the importance of this work, and turn out a perfect dictionary free from all mistakes and with every word spelt strictly as it should be. This is your job."

Bapu had spoken. I bowed my head, and prepared to obey. Remembering the saying, "If a *sannyasi* (monk) wants to marry, he should start with allowing hair to grow on his shaven pate," I tackled Gujarati grammar first. I gathered together everything of note that had been said about Gujarati spelling in the last forty years. I formed Mahadev-bhai,

Narahari-bhai and myself into a committee of three. And then I plunged into the work. Mahadev was too busy to help us. For five years Narahari-bhai and myself toiled and moiled, and at last, with the help of many kind friends, we succeeded in turning out the kind of dictionary that Bapu had demanded, and laid it at his feet.

Bapu was very pleased. He wrote in the *Navajivan* what amounted to an edict: "Henceforth, no one shall have the right to indulge in erratic spelling."

Bapu was granted his heart's desire. That dictionary became the final authority throughout Gujarat. The Educational Department of the Government of Bombay, the Bombay University, the various States in Gujarat and Kathiawad — all have recognized and accepted it as the last word where Gujarati spelling is concerned. So much so, that our dictionary acts as the final arbiter in the Cross-Word Puzzles Competitions!

40

When Bapu left South Africa for good, he decided that he should bring no money away from there. "We object," he said to himself, "when Englishmen take their earnings away to England and out of India. We think it injustice, and call it loot. What right have we Indians, then, to loot South Africa in like fashion?"

So he made a trust of all the money he had earned in South Africa, and arranged for it to be utilized for public activities there. He came away with nothing but the addresses he had received there, and

books which had been given him as gifts — about twenty thousand in number. The books he gave away to the Satyagraha Ashram when it was started ; and when the Ashram was wound up, he handed them over to the Ahmedabad Municipality. As for the addresses, they just lay somewhere forgotten and uncared for, and were presumably destroyed.

On his return to India Bapu was faced with the problem of his family inheritance. There were houses in Porbandar and Rajkot, and they were all occupied by members of the Gandhi family. Bapu called all his relatives together and said, "I make over my share of the family inheritance to you." But that was not enough for him — he went even further. He made his four sons also sign the deed of gift, declaring that they too were renouncing all rights to the family property.

He thus rid himself and his sons of what, to him, was an intolerable incubus.

41

It was 1927. Rajaji had arranged a South Indian tour for Bapu, in order to collect funds for *khadi* work. In the course of this tour we went right down to Ceylon. Bapu delivered most eloquent and effective speeches in Ceylon. One day — I think it was in Jaffna — Bapu was speaking on Lord Buddha, his mission and his achievements. He described Lord Buddha's environment, the peculiarities of the age in which he lived, and how he came to discover his real mission in life. Bapu was so absorbed in his subject, so carried away by it, so identified with it for the time being, that in one place he said, "Then

I saw" when he should really have said, "Then he saw". I wonder if he was aware of the slip he had made. Anyway it was a most wonderful speech.

We were discussing Bapu's speech that night — Mahadev-bhai, Rajaji and I. I said, "At one point in his speech today, Bapu spoke rather like Krishnamurti (of the Star of the East Society), did he not?" and Rajaji broke in eagerly, "Did you also mark that, Kaka?"

And we both burst out laughing.

Then I said, "The fact is, Bapu had become so one with Buddha in that moment, that the first person singular slipped out of his lips, as it were, involuntarily. I do not think we need attach any mystic significance to it. Bapu is doing for his own times, and in his own way, exactly what Lord Buddha did for his. That is all."

It was rather a solemn thought. I continued, "God forbid that Bapu should ever come to regard himself as an incarnation of Lord Buddha. To my mind, that would be highly dangerous. I cannot imagine Bapu doing such a thing. It is quite true that he has risen far, far above all sectarianism, but he certainly has not broken away from the Hindu community. He has to remain Hindu till the end. That is the way he will serve the world, and that is the only way in which he can mould the Hindu religion to his own passionately conceived ideal. If he ever makes such a mistake again, well, I shall know that I was mistaken........" But he never made such a mistake again.

42

I have already referred elsewhere to the serious illness which preceded Bapu's campaign against the Rowlatt Act. I have also recounted how Bapu met us all after that night of tribulation, and entrusted to us his message of non-violence for India. In the evening prayers, our music-teacher, Shri Narayanrao Khare, chose, for some reason, a *bhajan* (religious song) the opening lines of which may be roughly translated thus:

> "Who but the *Guru* can show the way?
> To him whose steps have gone astray
> Death is a trial sore."

This *bhajan* struck me as being quite the wrong thing to sing on that particular occasion. Bapu considered himself very near death, and this sounded rather like reproach mixed with a warning, as though we were saying to him, "You have found no *guru*. You are not equipped to face 'the sore trial of Death'. What will happen to you?" Hardly a pleasant thought for Bapu!

Anasuyabehn did not like this *bhajan* either, but for other reasons.

Any way, our interest in Bapu's avowed search for a *guru* grew keener, and we started discussing the matter oftener than we had done formerly. Bapu had often said in our hearing that Gokhale-ji was his 'political *guru*', but that was a different thing altogether. Moreover, examining Gokhale-ji's politics and Bapu's, it is difficult to find any similarity between them. I have a theory that when Bapu first met Gokhale-ji, he was just at the right age for hero-

worship. Gokhale-ji was wonderfully sympathetic and appreciative, and Bapu's grateful heart promptly invested Gokhale-ji's politics with all his own ideals . . . Be that as it may, it is quite certain that Gokhale-ji was never Bapu's spiritual *guru.*

Shrimad Rajachandra was another remarkable man who is still supposed by some people to have been Bapu's *guru.* He was an expert jeweller of Bombay, and a *shatawadhani,* that is, he could concentrate with equal ease on a hundred things simultaneously ; but, more than anything else, he was a man of faith and an untiring seeker after truth. Bapu was impressed by him at their very first meeting, and asked him many questions which he (Rajachandraji) was able to answer to Bapu's satisfaction. Hence the fond delusion amongst Rajachandraji's disciples that Bapu was a co-disciple with themselves !

As a matter of fact, Bapu himself admitted that he was a disciple, but with certain reservations. When, however, the fact was being exaggerated, he was compelled to state frankly that while he was convinced that " Shrimad " was a true Seeker, he was not prepared to regard him as one who had attained the final goal of God-realization.

At one time Bapu wrote : " I am in search of a *guru,* because a *guru* can help one to attain salvation." And behold, he was deluged with letters from eager well-wishers, all fired with zeal to see him saved ! Someone advised him earnestly to go to such and such a great *mahatma* in such and such a place and sit at his feet, because the *mahatma* was a great *yogi,* and he possessed all the occult powers, and if he could not

save Bapu — one gathered from the letter — no one else could. Another letter advertised another saint elsewhere. There was no end to people's zealous efforts on Bapu's behalf. Whether any would-be *guru* advertised himself directly to Bapu, I do not know. But the public showed a spirit of enthusiastic helpfulness which, while it was touching, became somewhat inconvenient after a while; so much so, that once again Bapu had to declare publicly that the *guru* he was seeking was none other than '*Bhagavan*' (God). "Only *Bhagavan*," he wrote, "can be my *guru*: He, who is the goal of all my seeking. He is the end and aim of all my efforts, — of my very existence."

Just as we *ashramites* call Gandhiji "Bapu", so the people of Shantiniketan called Rabindranath Tagore "Gurudev". Now, it was either Gandhiji's nature or his habit to call people by the names by which they had become famous. Thus, he started saying "Gurudev" instead of 'Ravibabu' whenever he had occasion to mention Poet Tagore. It was the same with Tilakji. Bapu began by calling him "Tilak Maharaj", and ended by saying the "Lokamanya", the title accorded to Tilakji by Maharastris. Mr. Jinnah became 'Qaid-e-Azam'. Shri Manilal Kothari a prominent worker of Gujarat, gave the title of 'Sardar' (Leader) to Shri Vallabhbhai Patel. It became quite popular — and Vallabhbhai became Bapu's 'Sardar' also!

Bapu's way was the same with everybody, great or small. Take me, for instance. I am known in my family, to my students and to my friends as 'Kaka' (literally meaning 'paternal uncle'). That appelation

has stuck to me. So much so, that when people see my full name, Dattatreya Balkrishna Kalelkar, written somewhere, they ask me with real curiosity if 'Dattatreya Balkrishna' is any relative of mine. Well — Bapu promptly started calling me 'Kaka', which sometimes gave rise to quite comical situations. I must explain that in India, when an elder writes to a much younger person, he puts the word *chiranjiva* before the name of his correspondee. It is a sort of blessing, meaning, roughly 'may you live long'. '*Chiranjiva* Kaka,' he used to write to me quite solemnly, and ended with equally simple solemnity, "Blessing from Bapu". Well — that was exactly how Bapu said 'Gurudev' when talking of Ravi-babu or writing about him. This aroused a great deal of misunderstanding in the minds of the uninitiated. People immediately jumped to the conclusion that Ravi-babu was Gandhiji's *guru*! It is needless to add that 'Gurudev' himself never harboured such a delusion, as will be seen from the following little incident.

When I went to Shantiniketan for the first time the first person I went to and met was Gurudev. I told him that I had read *Gitanjali* and several other books of his, and begged him to recount for my benefit some of his mystic and spiritual experiences. He cut me short with a quite definite statement. "People call me 'Gurudev'," he said, "but I myself have no faith in *gurus*. I do not believe that any one can become any one else's *guru*, or that any one can act as a guide to any one else. The field of spiritual endeavour is one where every one has not only to find, but even to evolve, his own path. The spiritual world can be

compared to the uncharted sea. I have evolved my own *sadhana* (means) through my poetry. When I chant *Satyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma* (*Brahma* is Truth, Knowledge, Infinity), I feel this whole universe to be but the manifestation of Truth. I do not believe in the unreality of Creation. The word '*maya*' has no meaning for me." He said much more, which it would be irrelevant to quote here. All I wish to point out is, that he who was known as 'Gurudev' to his people, himself did not believe in a *guru*, and there is not the slightest likelihood that when Bapu called him 'Gurudev', he imagined that Bapu had made him his *guru*.

43

In 1921 the Bezwada All India Congress Committee had decided that a crore of rupees should be collected for the Lokamanya Tilak Memorial Fund, and all efforts were being made to this end. One day Shri Shankarlal Banker came to Bapu and said, "Our province (Bombay) has thought of a rather good way of collecting money for the Fund. All the best theatrical companies have got together, and they say that they will pick out their best actors, who will co-operate in staging a really first class play as a benefit performance, provided Bapu attends the play." Bapu made no answer. Shankarlal-bhai went on persuasively, "It would not be a matter of thousands but of lacs, Bapu, because they can charge what they like for the tickets." Bapu took not a moment to make up his mind. "It cannot be," he said decisively, "I never go to see

lays acted by professionals. I would not break this ule even for a crore of rupees."

And that was that.

44

Here is another incident from 1921. The Guja-at Vidyapith had just been founded in Ahmedabad, ut the constitution had yet to be finalized. I had nuch to do with this, and I was working like a demon, ay and night, to get the thing going properly. One ay we were having a meeting of our Senate, and Mr. ndrews, who was present by invitation, posed a uestion: "Will Harijans be allowed to attend the 'ollege, or will they not?" I answered promptly, Of course they will be." But there were many nembers of the Senate whose minds were not pre-ared for this drastic social reform. Amongst our ffiliated institutions was a school called the Model School, the proprietor of which was one of he objectors. Some others also stated their diffi-ulties if this rule was enforced. Finally, when ve failed to reach any conclusion, we decided to drop he matter that day and refer it to Bapuji. I was uite happy. I knew what Bapu would say. And hat was exactly what Bapu did say. The Vidyapith vas to make no distinctions of any sort between uman beings.

The news spread, and Gujarat began to buzz like swarm of bees. Bombay woke up with a jerk and tarted taking notice. A few wealthy Vaishnavas ame to Bapu and said, "The work of national edu-ation is a truly religious one. We would be happy o give as much money as you want to further it, if

only you could leave this Harijan-entry question alone! (Those Vaishnavas had come prepared to give six or seven lacs on the spot.) Bapuji answered, "Leave alone the Vidyapith Fund; if somebody were to offer me even Swaraj as a bribe towards keeping untouchability alive, I would not touch it with a pair of tongs."

Exit the Vaishnava lords of wealth, definitely sadder, and, let us hope, wiser. It must have been a shock to them to realize that there were things in the world which their money could not buy.

45

In the beginning of our Ashram life we could not get good milk, so we made our own arrangements. We got good cows and buffaloes and set up our own dairy.

A few days later, however, Bapu explained to us that the keeping of both buffaloes and cows would set an example disastrous to the cause of cow-protection, since to keep both means the ultimate destruction of both species. The male buffalo is practically useless from the agricultural point of view and is therefore slaughtered in infancy. While the female buffalo, who gives richer milk than the cow, is the latter's most formidable rival, and is retained in preference to her (the cow) wherever it is a question of keeping either the one or the other. The cow is then slaughtered for meat, while the bullock is kept on account of his usefulness to agriculture. At all costs, therefore, we must avoid setting any example conducive to the continuance of this state of affairs.

So we got rid of our buffaloes.

One day a calf fell ill. We did all we could to relieve its sufferings. We called in experts on animal diseases from villages; we called in the vet — all to no purpose. The calf went steadily from bad to worse.

The suffering of the poor dumb creature became so intolerable, even to the onlookers, that Bapu called us together and suggested that we should give it the merciful relief of death. "It is the height of cruelty," he pleaded, "to go on prolonging its agony like this."

A keen discussion arose. Shri Vallabhbhai Patel came over from Ahmedabad and said, "This calf cannot last longer than two or three days at the most, but if you kill it, you will bring a regular hornets' nest about your ears. The whole Hindu community will be shocked to the depths.* We are just leaving for Bombay to collect funds — not a pie shall we get to bless ourselves with. Our work will suffer terribly, Bapu."

Bapu heard him out in grave silence, appreciating his difficulties. Then he said, "What you say is perfectly correct. But it is impossible for us to sit still and do nothing while that calf writhes away its last moments in agony. I believe that it would be sheer wickedness to deny to a fellow-creature the last and most solemn service which we can render it."

Vallabhbhai never argued with Bapu on matters like this, so having heard his dictum, he went away

* With the Hindus the cow is a sacred animal and should never be harmed, much less killed.

without a word. Then Bapu called all the *ashramites* together and asked each one of us what we thought. I said, " I consider that what you are doing is quite right in principle. But I can give no opinion until I have seen the calf with my own eyes." So I went to the *goshala* to have a look at it for myself. The calf was lying there unconscious and I could not make up my mind one way or the other. I waited, and then the calf began to kick its legs on the floor in a paroxysm of unendurable pain, and I felt I simply could not bear it. I went to Bapu and said, " I am with you all the way, Bapu." Bapu wrote a note to someone, asking for a man to be sent with a gun...... The man came, but said, " It is not necessary to shoot the calf. Doctors have an injection which just puts the poor creatures instantly and painlessly to sleep." So then a Parsi doctor was called, and he administered peace to the suffering calf.

This incident created a tremendous furore throughout the country. Bapu had to write an endless number of explanatory articles. The whole of Hindu India was rocked to its very foundations. But Bapu's loyalty to his spiritual ideals and devotion to the cause of cow-protection saved him from the very serious consequences which might have accrued from his fearless and divinely merciful experiment in practical *ahimsa*.

46

The Punjab atrocities, the Khilafat question and the attainment of Swaraj were the three grounds on which Bapu based his countrywide movement against the Government. The movement, I think,

was unique in the annals of Indian History. The Hindus and the Muslims had become one ; we were conscious of a new heaven and a new earth. A new life was set flowing in the veins of a moribund nation. The British were not at all happy about it. The Government of India began to feel that it must come to some sort of terms with Gandhiji. So the Viceroy sent for Bapu.

The Punjab atrocities were over and done with. Bapu had refused to allow the country to demand punishment of the evil-doers. Had the Government been generous enough to admit its mistake, the matter would have gone no further. But the other two questions remained — the Khilafat and Swaraj. Regarding the Khilafat, the Viceroy argued that that was an international affair with which India had nothing to do. It involved many delicate problems. "Leave the Khilafat alone," was the gist of the Viceroy's argument, "and let us discuss only Swaraj. Then we shall be able to get somewhere." "But how can that be ?" argued Bapu in his turn. "The Mussulmans are an important part of India. They are suffering from a sense of injustice. It is impossible for me to remain aloof and indifferent to their feelings."

Bapu's firmness brought about a deadlock, and the negotiations fell through. Prominent leaders in India blamed him in private conversation, saying that the Khilafat matter was no concern of India, and Bapu should have washed his hands of it in the larger interests of the country. "At least," they lamented, "we would have got Swaraj." (In those days our ideas of Swaraj were somewhat nebulous. We would probably have been content with anything

that was given us, dubbed it 'Swaraj', and considered it a great political achievement.) But Bapu was not the one to be content with sops, for one thing; and for another, his chief concern was to keep the Indian political question free from blots. He had identified himself with the Mussulmans, he had ranged himself on their side. And now to leave them in the lurch at the dictates of self-interest would have been an unforgivable betrayal. And the fruits of such a betrayal, Bapu was convinced, could never be either sweet or healthy. So he spoke his mind to the Viceroy and nothing came of that interview from which many had expected so much.

47

Chiranjiva Chandan had become engaged to my son Satish. He was still studying at Oxford, and she had just returned to India after completing her studies in America. She came to Wardha. Bapu said, "This Chandan has studied English and is now a regular high-brow. Of what use is she to India? She knows no Hindi at all! And she certainly will not be able to learn it once she is married and immersed in domestic life. We must arrange to have her taught Hindi now, while we still have the chance." So we decided to send her away to Dehradoon and keep her as a boarder in the Dehradoon Kanya Gurukul. Revered Ba (Kasturba) was going there in any case to preside over their annual function, and the Gurukul people had invited me to speak on that occasion. Chandan came along with us. The people of the Gurukul made arrangements to teach her Hindi, and arranged for her to teach something

there in return. (She had taken her M.A. in Sociology at the Boston University.)

In the meanwhile Bapu started his Satyagraha in Rajkot. Chandan was a Kathiawadi girl — how could she bear to keep out of it? She went off to Rajkot to join the Satyagraha. But some settlement was arrived at, the Satyagraha was postponed and Bapu returned to Wardha. Chandan fell ill in Rajkot.

I received a letter from Chandan saying she was ill. Bapu was leaving for Bombay that very day, and I had gone to the station to see him off. I told him about Chandan's illness. Bapu demanded particulars. I handed over Chandan's letter to him. He could not read it then on account of the crowd, so he took it away with him.

The next morning, even before reaching Bombay, he sent Chandan a long and detailed wire telling her what medicine to take, what to do and what to avoid; also telling her to proceed immediately to Ahmedabad and take treatment from a certain *vaidya* * there, and so on. That wire must have cost him anything from twelve to fifteen rupees. That was just like Bapu. When he considered it necessary, he spent unstintingly. But as a rule he was the soul of thrift.

* Physician who practises the Indian system of medicine.

[The following version is factually different from the incident which appeared in the Hindustani original. A friend from Bengal (Shri B. N. Guha) very kindly drew my attention to the factual errors. I recognized that his facts were correct and therefore give his version below.

It is surprising how a recollection of an incident as related by Mahadev-bhai to me could be factually inaccurate! I give this detailed explanation in order to record how actual facts can get distorted even during the same generation and at the hands of persons who are anxious to be scrupulously accurate.]

Shri Chittaranjan Das was lying ill at Darjeeling. Gandhiji went to see him there. Descending from the hills, he resumed his interrupted tour. From Jalpaiguri Gandhiji and party were to catch the Darjeeling-Calcutta mail for Poradah, and there change over to the corresponding Dacca Mail for Goalundo. Due to a landslip the mail was running late by an hour and a half. There was, therefore, not the ghost of a chance of its connecting the Dacca Mail at Poradah and that meant Gandhiji's missing his engagement at Nawabganj, a village in Dacca District. But how could he miss an appointment? Something had to be done. At the suggestion of Satishbabu Gandhiji decided to go by a special train, "my engagement with our people is to be kept as strictly as my engagement with the Viceroy," said he. So a special train was arranged for from Parvatipur to Goalundo, the cost being Rs. 1,140/-. Gandhiji and party thus reached Goalundo in time to catch the boat for Nawabganj.

Gandhiji who would not throw away even an used envelope without making use of its blank reverse, did not hesitate, when occasion demanded it, to spend a thousand in place of a hundred.

Leave alone the big people. What about the 'little' ones?

We were touring the Madras Presidency in the course of our *khadi* work. I think we had reached as far as Calicut. To the north of Calicut, is a place called Nileshwar. A student of mine was gallantly working there in a small *khadi* centre in extremely difficult circumstances. He was hoping with all his heart that Bapu would come to his centre, and he had made all sorts of loving preparations for his visit. But something or the other happened to upset our whole programme, and we were reluctantly compelled to give up the idea of including Nileshwar in our tour. Bapu could not bear the thought of it. His kind heart bled for that boy, working alone there, and longing for Bapu. He said, "Think with what faith that boy goes on working there, in that lonely spot, with no help, no sympathy, no sort of encouragement. No, no. I cannot fail him. I simply must go there." Bapu's health was most unsatisfactory at that time, so Rajaji gently remonstrated with him. "It cannot be done, Bapu!" he said. Bapu flared up. "Cannot be done? Of course it can be done, and it must be done. Arrange for a special train for me. That boy has faith in me. I cannot let him down." It was not that Rajaji minded the expense at all — all he was concerned about was the strain of the journey on Bapu's frail body. So he still went on trying to persuade Bapu out of his decision. Mahadev-bhai added his persuasion to Rajaji's. Finally I, too, added my voice to the general chorus. "Bapuji," I said, "I cannot

help feeling that Rajaji is right. I will write a long letter to that boy, explaining everything in detail. I will tell him that your mind was set on going, but we held you back. I will tell him all about it. I am sure he will be reasonable." When Bapu saw that I, too, had gone over to Rajaji's side, he gave in, helplessly and with a heavy heart.

My student, of course, understood everything, and so, presumably, forgave everything. He even wrote and said it was a good thing Bapu did not go there. But I have an uncomfortable feeling that that boy has not still forgiven Rajaji. Poor Rajaji has so often been the victim of such misunderstandings.

50

Simple living and working with his own hands seems to have come more or less naturally to Bapu. When he was a student in England, he would walk any distance to seek out vegetarian restaurants where he could get the sort of food he wanted, and he finally ended up by cooking his food himself. This was what brought him and Shri Keshavrao Deshpande together. They chummed up, and had a good old time cooking porridge together.

When Bapu returned to India as a full-fledged barrister he always walked to the court from his house. When a white barber in South Africa refused to cut his hair, he snipped off his hair himself, and went to court looking a regular figure-of-fun. The white barristers were highly amused. Mr. Gandhi was asked facetiously if the

mice had been at his hair. Whereupon Mr. Gandhi told them the whole story.

A little later he read Tolstoy and Ruskin, and his love for simplicity and self-help increased. During the Zulu War Bapu worked in the Ambulance Corps, and the difficulties and privations he suffered then were beyond all imagining. He has not referred to them in his *Autobiography*, but the story of those days is enough to make one's hair stand on end. There is nothing that the human body can endure that Bapu did not endure — and indeed, even more. While he was working like that the idea came to him that he who would be an ideal servant must observe strict celibacy. Besides, Tolstoy's idea of 'bread-labour' appealed to him immensely. He became convinced that all who eat food to keep their bodies alive, and wear clothes to protect their bodies from heat and cold must lend a hand in the production of food and clothing. He went further. "If we want to emancipate the Harijans, we must do scavenging work ourselves. We must bring intelligence to bear on this lowest of all tasks, introduce cleanliness into it, do it in a scientific manner and transform it into a high calling." And he immediately put his thought into practice.

* * *

In 1917 Bapu went to Champaran, Bihar. When he began to record the statements of the victimized peasants of Bihar, many Bihari lawyers volunteered to help him in his stupendous task. Shri Rajendra-babu, Braja-babu, and many others are Bapu's colleagues and comrades of those Bihar days. Bapu asked them all to stay with him. They agreed, and their dwelling place became a sort of *ashram*. All these

lawyers contributed funds towards the upkeep of the *ashram*. But the head of that *ashram* was a hard-headed and, on occasions, a tight-fisted *bania*! He harassed and harried them over every pie. Were the mangoes expensive? Then why had they been bought? No expensive mangoes for this *ashram*, ordered Bapu. Buy them if they are cheap, or not at all. But was he content with this? No, not at all. One day the command went forth, 'start washing your own clothes'.....The principle behind all this was obvious. True, the expenses were being paid by the lawyers, but once the money had been handed over, it became public money. "It must be spent in a way befitting the representatives of a suffering and penurious country," said Bapu.

In ordinary times Bapu insisted on simplicity and poverty, but if any one fell ill, he grudged nothing. No matter how expensive fruits might be, they were provided. Sometimes he kept his patients on fruit-juice alone for months at a time.

If simplicity was his ideal, so was common-sense and loving kindness.

51

What I am now relating happened in 1930, just a little before I joined Bapu in Yeravda Jail. The moment Bapu set foot in the prison, the Inspector General of Prisons approached him and asked, "How many letters would you like to write every week?" "Not one," said Bapu. The Inspector then asked, "How many letters do you need to receive every week from outside?" "I do not need to receive even a single letter," replied Bapu. The Inspector

understood then the sort of man he had to deal with. Finally it was settled that Bapu should be allowed to write as many letters as he chose on Mondays or Tuesdays.

Then the question arose — to which of his relatives should he write? Bapu said, "Every Indian is my relative. And as for the *ashramites*, I can certainly make no distinction between them and my blood-relations." So it was decided that the *ashramites* should be regarded as relatives and Bapu could send a letter to any *ashramite* he chose. It was after all this had happened that I reached Yeravda.

The Government had fixed upon the monthly sum of Rs. 150 for Bapu's expenses. because he was a state prisoner. Major Martin, the Jail Superintendent, brought a whole lot of furniture, crockery and all sorts of utensils the very first day. "For whom have you brought all this?" asked Bapu. "Take it away, please!" Major Martin was puzzled. He said, propitiatingly, "I have written and told the Government that at least 300 rupees a month should be spent on an honoured guest like you. I have every hope that Government will agree." Bapu said, "That is all very well. But after all, all that money would come from the Indian Treasury, would it not? I do not want to increase the burden on my country. I hope that my boarding expenses will not come to more than 35 rupees a month. Had my health permitted, I would have eaten 'C' class food. But to my shame. fruit is for me a sheer necessity; so is goat's milk." So all the paraphernalia of comfort was sent away, and an iron cot, a mattress, and some 'C' class eating utensils were also sent for: a *tasla* (bowl), a *chambu* (goblet) etc. All the utensils were made of

a metal that had been mixed with pewter or tin, so that they turned black if they were not carefully cleaned every day, and any water that was kept in them acquired a sort of oily scum. For lavatory, Bapu had a separate room with a commode, and he slept out in the open, in the garden. When I went there, I got a little netted cupboard made for Bapu's food-stuffs, and a table to put it on. Also a high stool for Bapu's chamber-pot. They were our special luxuries.

When Bapu sat down to write, he would take up the letters he had received, carefully cut out the parts of the letter paper that had not been written on, and write his answers on them. The Ashram letters used to come in one large envelope. He would paste clean paper on that envelope, enclose his own letters in it, and return it to the Ashram. When an envelope started showing signs of wear and tear, it was my job to repair and rejuvenate it. One day we had quite an argument about this. But I am afraid it was a waste of Bapu's valuable time, for we remained ' of the same opinion still '. We were both sorry about that.

I, too, have a streak of miserliness in my composition. Packets of dates and raisins would come tied with thread or string, which I carefully untied and hoarded. One day Bapu had need of thread. I immediately brought it along from my hidden store. He was delighted ! "From where on earth did you get it ?" he asked. I told him. He said, "I see that the wealth of the country will be safe in your hands. You should be made Director of Public Instruction."

Those days Bapu did a great deal of spinning. Having finished his weekly letters, memorized verses

from the *Gita,* and studied his Marathi reader with me, he would settle down to a bout of spinning. And hefty bouts they were, I can assure you. Hours and hours. — The *Yeravda Chakra* (spinning wheel) of today was invented by Bapu then. — He was very careful not to allow his yarn to break, as far as possible, but of course it sometimes did break, and I used to gather the discarded bits together and make them into thread with which to tie his hanks of yarn. But even then we had more waste yarn than we could dispose of. I thought of making a little *khadi* bag, stuffing it with the waste yarn, and making a pin-cushion of it. But we had no coloured *khadi,* and white *khadi* would get dirty very soon, and would not be fit for Bapu's use....What was to be done? I pondered and pondered — and got a brain-wave. We had some iodine. I soaked the bag in iodine, and stuffed it with the waste yarn. It became a fine pin-cushion! Bapu accepted my gift with pleasure and kept it carefully.

I finished my sentence and was released, but that pin-cushion still remained on Bapu's desk and was kept by him for a long time after. Any useful thing evolved out of odds and ends appeals to him immensely, always.

* * *

When I first went to Maganwadi (in Wardha), I saw a lot of thick pieces of bamboo lying about. I took them and with the aid of a pen-knife, carved them into spoons, paper-cutters, and many other useful little things. Then I presented them all to Bapu. And when Bapu, in his turn, presented them one by one to people like Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Maulana Azad, and even mentioned them in the

Harijanbandhu, I, a man of fifty, was as happy as a little child.

52

In the early days of the Satyagraha Ashram, when it was still in Kochrab Village, near Ahmedabad, Swami Satyadev came there to pay us a visit. He and I had already met each other in Almora, in 1911-12. He had then just lately returned from America, and soon after he had taken *sannyasa* (vow of renunciation) as a self-dedication to the attainment of India's freedom.

He had written several books before he came to the Ashram. He had become famous as Satyadev *parivrajak* (the itinerant monk). As soon as he arrived, we started listening to his recitation of *Tulsi Ramayana* after evening prayers. Seeing his passion of Hindi, Bapu sent him to do Hindi propaganda in Madras. The first text-book to be published in connection with the Madras propaganda for Hindi was written by Satyadev-ji.

We *ashramites* now left our rented bungalow in Kochrab and settled on our own land on the banks of the river Sabarmati. Once Swami Satyadevji visited us there also. He was simply delighted with the work that Bapu was doing for the freedom of the country. He was the guest of the Ashram, and we served him with a will. Special arrangements had to be made about his food and drink, but it was a pleasure to us to make him comfortable.

One day Satyadev-ji came to Bapu and said, "I desire to join your Ashram. I shall live here as an *ashramite*."

Bapu said, "That is excellent. The Ashram is meant for people like you. But you will have to discard your *sannyasi's* ochre if you become an *ashramite.*"

This was a great shock to Satyadev-ji. He was deeply annoyed, but, of course, he could not show his annoyance to Bapu. He contented himself with a mild protest. "How can that be? I am a *sannyasi.*" Bapu retorted, "When have I asked you to leave your *sannyasa*? Try to understand what I say." And then very quietly Bapu explained: "You see, our countrymen have such a reverence for the ochre robe, that the moment they see it they start worshipping its wearer and offering him their whole-hearted service. Now we should make it a point not to accept service, but to give it. If you go clad in the *sannyasi's* robes, people will never take from you the service which we have made it our duty to offer them; on the contrary they will fall over each other in their eagerness to serve you. So you see, we cannot afford to retain anything which might act as an obstacle in the way of our prescribed acts of service. *Sannyasa,* after all, is primarily an attitude of mind, a purpose and a resolve. What has it to do with outer vestments? Renouncing the ochre is by no means synonymous with renunciation of *sannyasa.*. If tomorrow we go off into the villages and start cleaning the lavatories, do you suppose the people will let you move a finger as long as you have the *sannyasi's* ochre on your body?"

Satyadevji understood, but could not agree to this. He came to me and said, "I simply cannot do this. I have donned this garb with a set purpose. I cannot now discard it."

53

Bapu's mind was free from all distinction between great and small, rich and poor. He was punctilious in his observance of the social conventions, so long as they did not militate against his principles. If they did — well, so much the worse for them!

This is a story of the old days. At that time, whenever Bapu went to Bombay he stayed with Revashanker Jagjivandas, brother of his friend Dr. Pranjivan Mehta. After Bapu became *Mahatma*, 'the cream of the cream' of Bombay society vied with one another in offering him their eager hospitality. But as long as Revashanker-bhai was alive, Bapu never dreamt of staying with any one else.

One day Swami Anand fell out with Revashankerbhai's cook. These cooks are sometimes very impertinent. They make a lot of distinction between 'big people' and 'small people'. That cook evidently insulted Swami Anand in some way. Swami was carried away by anger, and, in his rage, dealt the insolent cook such a blow that the man's knees gave way, and he sat down on the floor......The matter reached Bapu's ears, whereupon Bapu said to Swami, "Had it been a quarrel between you and someone of your own class, you would not have struck him. This man is a servant, that is why you dared to raise your hand against him. Go and apologize to him at once." Swami was too proud to do so. "Very well, then," said Bapu, "if you are not prepared to rectify an injustice, you will have to leave me." What could poor Swami do? He walked off to offer his apology.

Swami had struck the cook with such force, that he had sprained his own wrist in the process. His wrist has not still regained its former strength.

54

Swami and I first came to know each other in 1909, when we were publishing a daily paper called the *Rashtramat* on behalf of the Tilak party in Bombay. After that we wandered about in the Himalayas together. When I joined the Ashram and began working for Bapu, Swami came sometimes and stayed with me, and naturally he met Bapu there.

Bapu wanted to issue two weeklies from Ahmedabad : the *Young India* and the *Navajivan*. Swami promised to come to Ahmedabad and look after the Navajivan Press for six months and set the whole thing working properly. Bapu's mind was set at rest as far as the Press was concerned.

Swami failed to arrive in Ahmedabad on the appointed day however. I (or someone) said to Bapu, " Swami was to have come today, but he has not turned up." Bapu had an answer ready : " Either he is dead or has fallen ill. No one can promise to come on a certain day and then fail to come if he can possibly help it." Bapu's stern words frightened me. I thought uneasily, " If Swami has been careless or lazy, he will fall terribly in Bapu's estimation."

Swami came the next day. The moment I saw him I asked, " Why did you not come yesterday ? " He said, " I started quite punctually from Bombay, but I got fever on the train, so I had to break journey at Surat. I went to my sister's house, took some medicine,

rested a bit and came along today." I told him what Bapu had said the day before. I also explained the cause of his delay to Bapu. Bapu said, "I was certain it must be something like that. What else could have kept him from fulfilling his engagement ? "

55

Swami took charge of the Navajivan Press that very day, and worked with such a will and such utter absorption, that he became, as it were, a part of the machine itself. Then came a period of great national activity and political upheaval and we were all sucked into the whirlpool of Bapu's stupendous undertakings, and night and day became the same for us.

One day I went to the Press. There was Swami, plunged in work as usual, a glass of milk beside him, some ripe and luscious bananas lying before him, and proof after proof coming into his hands from the press. He would break off a bit of banana with his left hand, and correct proofs with his right. The proof dealt with, he would take a hasty sip of the milk. The sip taken, back to his proof again. This kind of thing used to go on for three or four days at a stretch. No time to bathe. No time for anything at all — sleeping where he worked.

This was the way he was working when he received a card from Bapu, despatched from some place in North India. It ran like this :" You are looking after Navajivan so well, that I have no cause to worry. I hope your work progresses satisfactorily." Swami was greatly puzzled. Why had Bapu sent him such a card? "I have complained of no difficulties,

nor is it likely that any one has complained about me." He wondered and pondered, and then he suddenly remembered. "Oh!" he said, "of course, that is what it is! I promised to work the Navajivan Press for six months, and the six months are up today. Oh! the clever old *bania*! This is the way of getting that promise renewed. I had completely forgotten that I came here for six months only. But that old man never forgets such things. Look at the way he is binding me over for a further period! Jivatram (Kripalani) is quite right when he says that that old man is the wiliest bird you could come across in a day's journey!"

56

Bapu had not called upon me to join his Ashram, but only to teach in the Ashram National School. And that, too, was how Shri Kishorlal Mashruwala and Shri Narahari Parikh came there. Mamasaheb Phadke and Shri Vinoba Bhave, on the other hand, came as prospective *ashramites*. We national teachers were not bound by the rules of the Ashram, nor was it incumbent upon us to take the Ashram vows. Nevertheless, I do not know how, we gradually grew to be *ashramites* in the ordinary sense also.

Bapu was going to Champaran from Ahmedabad. I met him at the Baroda Station. He fired a question at me: "Where is Champaran? Do you know?"

There must be very few people in India who know the correct answer to this question, but I was a national teacher, and ignorance in me would have

been rather disgraceful. Fortunately I had heard the name of Champaran in the course of my pilgrimage to Nepal via Muzaffarpur. I said, "I cannot give you its exact location, but I know it is somewhere in North Bihar. I cannot tell you whether Champaran is a town or a district, but I can say this — it is not a forest like Naimisharanya or Dandakaranya." (I had not heard the name of Rajaji's Vedaranya in those days.)

Bapu was satisfied. Then I said, "You want to open a national school in the Ashram, and you are going off to Champaran yourself. You will have to lay the foundation of the school. We will have to consult you about everything." Bapu replied, "This is only the beginning. We are not going to expand our work yet a while. Even if we make mistakes, we can always correct them, can we not?" But I was not satisfied, and obviously showed it, for Bapu continued, "We are just beginning life in the Ashram. I cannot keep away for long. I will have to visit the Ashram once a fortnight." I cannot tell you whether I was more delighted or astonished at this. Think of it! From Ahmedabad to Champaran! I had never dreamt that this political leader cared so much for that little Ashram and tiny school that he was prepared to come all the way from distant Champaran to Ahmedabad every fortnight just to have a look at them, regardless of all the fatigue and expense involved in such a journey. I cannot tell you how happy I felt. I said to myself, "Well, Bapuji, if you consider Ashram life and our national school so very important, you may be certain that we, too, shall give them of our very best."

Bapu was as good as his word, I may add. He came regularly once a fortnight, as he had promised.

57

Our Ashram school started its work ; Mashruwala and Parikh came and joined us ; Bapu arrived punctually in our midst every fortnight, sat with us, and discussed everything with us, big or small, important or otherwise.

One day Bapu said to us, "Let me make one thing quite clear to you. This school that you are managing is not mine but yours. I have taken upon myself the responsibility of providing it with funds, because people know me and trust me, but that does not make the school mine. Whatever advice I give you here must be regarded as a suggestion merely. You are not bound to accept it if you do not agree with it. Do whatever seems right and proper to you without any doubt or hesitation. Of course, if I had been living and working in your midst as a teacher, I would have tried my best to bring you round to my point of view. But as I am not working as a teacher, I have no right to force my opinions down your throats. I have the fullest faith in you. I am convinced that no harm can ever come from what you think fit to do."

58

One day we were discussing caligraphy. Bapu disliked his own handwriting, so he attached great importance to the beauty and legibility of script.

His English script was not so bad, and when he wrote a letter or article with special care and

attention, his handwriting was full of forceful individuality and therefore interesting. He could write Gujarati with both hands, which was very convenient as he always had such a lot of writing to do. He wrote *Hind Swaraj* on board the ship, while returning to South Africa from England, and on steamer stationery. That book has been printed in facsimile also, and both his handwritings can be seen there. There is quite a lot of difference between them. The left-hand writing is much more legible than the right-hand one.

Bapu was always telling us that children should be taught drawing before they were taught writing. Once the hand had steadied itself on form, it could not go wrong on the letters of the alphabet. I thought over this principle of Bapu, worked it out scientifically, and came to agree entirely.

59

We were in South India, probably in Bangalore. Bapu sat in his room, working. There was a stream of visitors, eager for a sight of him, coming and going. A gentleman came along with a newly-wed couple, who were dressed even more richly than brides and grooms usually are. The gentleman presented them to Bapu saying, "Mahatmaji, they have been married today, and they have come for your blessing." Bapu made them sit in front of him and said, "Blessings cannot be had for nothing, you know! Have you brought anything for Harijans as payment? You must have given lavish *dakshinas* (presents) to your *purohits* (priests). But have you given anything to the Harijans? I would not let you cheat the Harijans,

mind ! Come on, give me *dakshina* (donation) for the Harijans, and you shall have your blessing."

The innocent newly-weds were mute, as newly-weds must be. They just looked at the gentleman who had brought them.

Then said the gentleman, " Mahatmaji, what you say is quite right ; but this young man is M. C. Raja's son, and this young lady his daughter-in-law ! "

M. C. Raja ! Harijan himself, and chief leader of the Harijans in the South ! Here was a jest indeed ! Bapu burst into a hearty laugh and said, " Oh, then you are absolved from this tax."

I said to myself, " Yes, it is a joke ! But it must have convinced this young Harijan couple of Bapu's deep abiding love for the Harijans."

60

I think it was 1933, the tail end of Bapu's Harijan tour. Bapu came to Sind. I had just been released from the Hyderabad Jail, and I promptly joined him.

I saw that Bapu's feet were all scratched and bleeding. I was horrified. " How has this happened ? " I asked. I was told that the scratches had been made by the nails of eager devotees, all scrambling for the touch of the Mahatma's purifying feet. I started considering this devotion. " If a man hurts other creatures," I thought, " he is threatened with hell. But *Mahatmas* are the legitimate prey of the masses. They think that this ' foot-touching ' of the *Mahatmas* provides them with a through ticket to Heaven ! "

That night I washed Bapu's poor feet tenderly with warm water, and applied vaseline to them. And

from the next day I constituted myself not so much the 'servant' as the 'protector' of the holy feet. And my wages were the curses and abuses of a balked public and they were not stinted by any means!

61

From Sind we went to Lahore, and stayed in a house that belonged to the Servants of the People's Society, in Anarkali. A famous doctor of Lahore heard that Bapu was ailing and that the journey to Lahore had proved something of a strain on him. He came in haste to have a look at Bapu and said, "Mahatmaji, I want to subject you to a thorough medical examination." Bapu said, "Right you are. Go ahead and examine me, if you want to. But I am really not so ill, you know." The doctor said, in tones charged with devotion, "But how can I be certain until I examined you? For my own peace of mind —" "Oh!" said Bapu, "if it is a question of your peace of mind, I have no objection. But I allow no one to examine me until he has first paid me my fees. So many people are waiting to meet me. How can I give you my time free of charge?"

The good doctor took out 16 rupees from his pocket and laid them before Bapu. "I have just come from visiting a patient," he said, "here is what I have earned, every pie of it." Bapu took the money with gladness and added it to his Harijan fund.

Before we left Lahore, the reporters of that place asked for an appointment. They all arrived in a body. Bapu was as a lion's cub that has tasted blood; he promptly demanded his customary fee. The reporters pooled their resources and presented him

with a donation on the spot. They pleased Bapu, and Bapu pleased them. They not only got matter for their papers, but this story as well, thrown in free, gratis and for nothing !

62

We received a letter from Bapu one day, from Champaran. Our Ashram was housed in a rented bungalow in Kochrab village. Bapu wrote, "The rains must now have started there, or be about to start ; and the wind will change its direction. So you must abandon the trenches in which you empty your pails of night-soil ; otherwise you might be troubled by their stench. Fill up the old trenches, therefore, and dig new ones."

I was deeply impressed by this letter. "Look at this ! " I marvelled. "Here is Bapu, absorbed in his enquiry in Champaran, finding time to give attention to these little things in this little Ashram in this little village of Kochrab ! I was reminded of Napoleon's famous dictum : "Victory in battle is to him who gives due attention to details, thinking them out beforehand, and dealing with them promptly as they arise." Also of Dr. Martineau's words, "Trifles make perfection, and perfection is not a trifle."

63

Mahadev-bhai and Narahari-bhai were very close friends. Once in the early days of the Ashram, Mahadev-bhai appears to have written in a letter to Narahari-bhai, "Bapu wants to bind me permanently to

such and such a work." Narahari-bhai replied jestingly, "The old man is a regular spider! Allow yourself to get caught in his net once, and you are caught for ever."

As a rule Bapu was most punctilious about not reading other people's letters, but that day the post went into his hands direct. Here was a letter from the Ashram, addressed to Mahadev. The handwriting was Narahari-bhai's. There was sure to be Ashram news in it. How nice! Bapu opened it, read it, and was deeply grieved. He wrote a letter to Narahari-bhai saying, "I have read your letter by accident. My life is running its course. What self-interest can I have now, in my old age, for which I might be prepared to exploit you?"

Poor Narahari-bhai! He read this letter, and the blood froze in his veins. He came running to me, told me the whole story, and thrust Bapu's letter into my hand. "Oh what can I say to Bapu now?" he mourned. "In what words shall I beg his forgiveness?" I comforted him, and said, "Say not a word about forgiveness. Apologize, and you are lost! Such contretemps must be caught on one's horns like a bull, as it were! Write Bapu, 'Why did you read my letter at all? It was a good thing I did not write much more than I did. We young men live in a world of our own. Just to give you an idea, I am writing down here all the other things which we say about you. Such humour is the salt of our lives, and it helps us to intensify our loyalty to you.'"

In 1930 Government removed me from Sabarmati Prison and took me to Yeravda Jail in order to keep me with Bapu. I saw that Bapu was not taking his usual fruit diet. Oranges and grapes were essential for his health, but he was doing without them. His food consisted of goat's milk, dates, a few raisins and boiled vegetables. The moment I got there I started begging him to take oranges at least, lest his health should suffer. But he was adamant. "I am sitting comfortably here as a state prisoner," he argued, "and outside, people are undergoing untold suffering: lathi-charges and what not. I do not feel at all like getting expensive fruit from the bazaar just for my own gratification."

I began to feel worried. I knew that Bapu needed fruit and, I knew even better, that he would not have it. What was to be done? I began to get a variety of vegetables from the jail authorities, which I boiled and shared with Bapu. Then I got tomatoes from the prison garden and felt a little better, because tomatoes are both fruit and vegetable, and would supply Bapu with the vitamins he needed. One day the jail people gave me a green *papayya*, which I also boiled. The next day the *papayya* they gave me turned out to be ripe, and I was delighted. Here was a way out of the wood. I said to Bapu, "I have been spared the necessity of cooking today's vegetables. The Lord of Day, *Suryanarayana* himself, has cooked it and sent it along for you. It has not come from the bazaar either. It is the cheapest thing in the jail garden."

I placed the ripe *papayya* before him. Bapu looked at me a trifle suspiciously. He smelt a certain speciousness in my argument, but had no answer ready with which to meet it. So he ate the *papayya*. Of course, ripe *papayyas* were not always available; still, I felt, something was better than nothing. Even occasional fruit was better than no fruit at all.

The episode ended there but it had its repercussions.

Pandit Motilal-ji, Jawaharlal-ji, Vallabh-bhai and several others were shifted to Yeravda Jail for discussions regarding a settlement with the Government. Jayaramdas-ji, the Sindhi leader, was included in the party. He asked me for details about Bapu's prison-life, which I gave. I told him also, the story of the *papayya*.

When Jayaramdas-ji was released, he wrote to the papers that Bapu was not taking his usual fruit-diet. The Government promptly denied this, asserting that Gandhiji was taking fruit. I was deeply annoyed, but what could I do? I was a prisoner.

That was our Indian Government of those days. A master of quibbles, an adept at prevarication, a perfect example of civilized hypocrisy!

65

About the same time as the episode of the *papayya*, another interesting thing happened. J. C. Kumarappa was editing the *Young India* those days. We used to get it in prison. The Government banned the paper, and Kumarappa began to issue cyclostyled copies for the benefit of an eager public. By great good luck, and the carelessness of the Government,

two or three copies strayed into the jail and came to us. But they were the last we got.

Those copies contained disturbing news of people having been charged with *lathis* and beaten after they had been arrested and locked up in prison.

Bapu read this, and his heart grew sore and his mind disturbed. That evening, as we strolled in the courtyard, he said, "I cannot bear this. It is too much. I am thinking of writing a letter to the Viceroy and then starting a fast." "For how many days?" I asked. "It is not a question of days," he said, "I cannot stand all this, that is all."

I divined what this meant and felt upset. This idea of his did not appeal to me at all. "Bapuji," I said after a thoughtful pause, "I have neither the courage nor the desire to oppose any decision of yours. But I ask your permission to give you my point of view before that decision becomes irrevocable. I know that you will never think me capable of trying to turn you from your path simply because your step might make me unhappy. All I want to say is, that we as a nation can never become strong unless we are allowed to receive the baptism of blood. Since the "Mutiny" of 1857 our political efforts have not been powerful enough to bring us any beatings. We have forgotten what it is to have broken heads and bullet-riddled bodies. That is why these things have become mere bogies in our sight. These *lathis* are helping to toughen our fibre. We will not kill, but it is well that our own blood should flow, and that we should become accustomed to enduring violence, even while we refuse to inflict it. And another thing, Bapu. You are the foundation on which a strong nation is being built. If I

were certain that by sacrificing yourself you would be able to rouse the desire for freedom in the country even to the pitch of madness, I would welcome that sacrifice. But to-day the country is not strong enough to stand on its own feet, and if anything happens to you, it will just collapse. So you see, Bapu, you must give us the chance to shed our own blood."

I do not know what effect my words had, if any. But Bapu became very serious, and said not a word thereafter.

And he did not fast.

66

About that time Bapu's weight began to go down. I said, "Bapuji, it seems to me that you are not taking as good care of your health as you should. And you are working too much." He replied, "No, no, Kaka, you are mistaken there. I know that actually nothing depends on me; it is He who bears the burden of all Creation. But people believe that everything depends on me. And so, even as a mother cares for her own health for the sake of the child in her womb, so do I care for my own health for the sake of the embryo Swaraj which I am supposed to carry."

67

After a few days Bapuji lengthened the time of his evening walk. Whereupon I asked, "Why is this Bapuji? Formerly you used to walk for not more than thirty minutes, but these days you walk for almost a whole hour. And you walk quite a lot in the morning, too. I hope this will not affect your

health adversely." Bapu replied, "You see, I am beginning to feel that my strength has grown, that is why I have taken to walking more. Walking is part of the observance of *brahmacharya* (celibacy)." "How so ?" I asked. "Every one," replied Bapu, "is given sufficient energy for his day's work, and he must use it up before he retires to sleep. That is an indication of non-possessiveness. If all the energy in the system is not used up, what remains will manifest itself as undesirable physical impulses. Since we are given our daily quota of energy without fail why should we save up any ? Our creative fluids can be turned into perspiration through hard labour and eliminated from the system, which brings pure and refreshing sleep. Thus, you see, labour is necessary both for *aparigraha* (non-possessiveness) and for *brahmacharya* (mental and physical celibacy)." He paused, then continued : "When I was in South Africa, I never stopped at thirty-nine miles if I had the energy to walk forty. I ate well and worked well."

One day Bapu said in the Ashram, "By mere simplicity of living one is not entitled to be regarded as keeping the vow of non-possession. We are all men of possessions. The white races are in fact more non-possessive than we are. For even if they earn five hundred rupees a month, they spend it all by the time pay-day comes round again. They do not worry about their future, or the future of their children. Anxiety about the future is sheer want of faith. Why should we fear that our children will be less efficient or successful than we are ? To save money for the sake of the children is to show one's lack of faith in them, and to spoil them. Barrister Santanam of

Lahore is of the same opinion. It was he who said one day in my hearing that to leave property to one's children was to do them an injustice."

68

The Ashram had just started. A *jyotishi* (astrologer) Girijashankar by name used to come quite often to visit Bapu. One day Bapu said to him, "Since you come here regularly, why do you not teach our boys Sanskrit?" So he started teaching Sanskrit to our boys.

He was a successful astrologer. Many wealthy men of Ahmedabad had faith in him. A rich man called Somalal wished to make a gift to Bapu and, if I remember aright, sent about forty thousand rupees by the *jyotishiji's* hand for the erection of a building for our national school. In those days we were leading a sort of gypsy existence in tents and huts made of bamboo mats. Before we could start operations, however, an epidemic of influenza broke out in Ahmedabad, and began taking a toll of from one to two hundred lives daily. Ahmedabad became a city of death and lamentation.

Bapu said to the *jyotishiji*, "We are not going to build any house this year, so please take Somalalbhai's money and return it to him." The *jyotishiji* said, "He has not asked for it, has he?" "No," said Bapu, "but what of that? The purpose for which he gave it is not being fulfilled, so why should we have the bother of keeping it? We are not here to look after other people's money." "True, true," said the *jyotishiji*, "but you are going to build your residential school some time, are you not? And then

you will need the money." "Certainly!" agreed Bapu, "but when that time comes we will get the money, never fear. If not from Somalalbhai, then from someone else." The *jyotishiji* went and repeated this conversation to Somalalji, whereupon Somalalji said, "What I gave, I gave. I will not take it back."

69

After his return from Mandalay, Lokamanya Tilak decided to rejoin the Congress, and in the Belgaum Session of the Provincial Political Conference he tried his best to persuade his party-members to do likewise. According to my urgent request and accepting Shri Gangadhar-rao Deshpande's invitation, Bapu also attended that Conference.

We were followers of Lokamanya Tilak, but we had lost our hearts to the grandeur of Bapu's personality, to his patriotism, and to the flawless purity of his character. I had become completely his, and I was trying to win Gangadharrao over to Bapu too.

We believed that if Tilak and Gandhi could get to know each other, it would prove a great blessing for the whole country. We tried to bring about a private meeting between these two great men, but it could not be done where Lokamanya was staying. So Gangadhar-rao took Lokamanya along to Bapu, and, leaving them together, went off somewhere else himself. We never learnt what took place between the two leaders, but as Lokamanya quit Bapu's room he said to Gangadhar-rao, "This man is not one of us. He follows a different path altogether. But he is true in every inch of him, and no harm can ever come

to India through him. We must be careful to avoid any conflict with him — on the contrary, we must help him whenever we can."

All that Bapu said in his speech at that Conference was, "It is well that you gentlemen are rejoining the Congress. But I would ask you to come in as soldiers, not as lawyers."

Two or three days after this a lawyer and leader in Belgaum Shri Belavi, had occasion to visit the Collector on some matter of business. "Well," asked the Collector, "so you invited Barrister Gandhi to your Conference, did you? And I have heard that the things he said to you all were far from pleasant. How sorry you must have been that you invited him." The 'you poor fellows!' purr in the Collector's voice put Belavi-ji's back up. "Not at all," he purred back sweetly. "Curious, is it not, how little you English know of the Indian character? We have a deep reverence for Gandhiji. He has every right to give us advice and guidance. We listened most respectfully to what he had to say. You will have proofs of our sincere appreciation of him one day."

The Collector fell silent.

70

We were still leading a gipsy life in tents and huts at the Ashram when the leader of the moderates in Ahmedabad, Sir Raman-bhai Nilkanth, came to see Bapu. In the course of the conversation he asked Bapu, "What is your opinion of Maharashtra? and of Tilak?" Bapu replied, "Tilak Maharaj is a great politician. Look at the work done by his Home Rule League. Tilak's arrows have never failed to find their

mark. As for Maharashtra, I have no words. The homeland of men like Tilak, the mother of a long line of patriots who have dedicated their whole lives to national service — what can be said about Maharashtra? Whatever those people take up, they carry it through to a finish."

Talking to someone else Bapu said, "If I can only bring Maharashtra to believe in my doctrine of *ahimsa*, I shall have no fears left for the future. I will just close my eyes and fall sound asleep. Maharashtra has such virility and efficiency. But alas!" Bapu added sorrowfully, "it lacks faith."

71

We celebrated Shivaji Day in Ashram. Shri Narayan-rao Khare sang *bhajans*, and Shri Vinoba and I made speeches. We referred in our speeches to what has been said about Shivaji by saints like Ramadas, Tukaram, Moropant etc., and we also gave a good many historical facts.

Finally Bapu was requested to speak a few words. "I am not particularly concerned," he told us, "with what history has to say about Shivaji. My faith is in the words of the saints. If the saints have pronounced Shivaji to be like Janak, if the saints believed Shivaji to be *dharma* (duty) incarnate, it is enough for me. I need no further proof."

72

When Bapu started his Ashram and settled in Gujarat, he quite naturally took up the loving task of getting the writings of his political *guru*, Gokhale, translated into Gujarati. It was decided that

Gokhale-ji's educational writings and speeches should be published in a separate volume, and the work was entrusted to a famous educationist. The translation went into print, and I think the printed formes were sent to Bapu in order that he might write a foreword for the book. He gave the formes to his secretary, Mahadev-bhai to look over.

Mahadev-bhai was not satisfied with the translation, and said so. "Both translation and language leave much to be desired," he said.

Bapu never allowed himself to be carried away by a mere opinion; he always demanded proofs. The accuser was often apt to turn into the accused in his presence. Mahadev-bhai gave some examples to justify his criticism. "Very well," said Bapu, "I see what you mean. Now give this translation to Narahari. I want his independent opinion." Poor Mahadev-bhai was thus set aside, but he had faith in his own judgment, so he made no protest.

Narahari-bhai was of the same opinion as Mahadev. But Bapu was still not wholly convinced. He said, "All right, now let us ask Kaka what he thinks."

I was well and truly landed! I could hardly talk Gujarati properly as yet, and my acquaintance with Gujarati literature was of the flimsiest. However, seeing that Bapu was serious, I set my teeth and girded up my loins for the fray. I took the original English book and the translation, and settled down to my task. I would have to make good my opinion before Bapu, I knew; so I was not inclined to take any risks. I read many pages both of the original and its translation with the utmost care, comparing each sentence of the one with that of the other,

And, alas for the poor translator! my voice of doom went forth to join the Mahadev-Narahari chorus.

This cloud of witness could not be gainsaid. Bapu grew very grave. "The whole edition will have to be burnt," he declared, "there is no other alternative. I cannot make such an indifferent gift to Gujarati."

The book was quite a large one. Who knows how many thousands of copies had been printed! But Bapu, once he had made up his mind, was ruthless. The edict went forth that every single forme of that book was to be burnt. It was forbidden even to sell any of it as waste paper. I have no idea what he wrote to the unfortunate translator. Anyway, the matter ended there as far as we were concerned.

Whatever the effect of this incident on the translator, it is certain that we three were thoroughly frightened. We realized that whatever we might wish to write must be written with care. We have had to keep up to Bapu's standard of Gujarati and translation. We got to be very very careful while translating Bapu's *Young India* articles into Gujarati. We used to get together and consult, and consider and discuss each word and phrase; we used to write, revise, rewrite every sentence and still feel afraid lest Bapu might disapprove of some word here or there!

Once an article of Bapu's came to us under the heading "Death Dance". We translated it, and, in my opinion, not badly. But it did not satisfy Bapu. "Well," we asked, "how would you translate it?" "*Patanga Nritya*" (literally Dance of the Moths near a flame), he replied. Bapu's literary knowledge

might not have been greater than ours, but he could charge his words with a quite remarkable significance.

In those days Swami Anand, Mahadev-bhai, Narahari-bhai and I were regarded as 'masters of translation' in the *Navajivan*, and along with us were Shri Jugatram Dave, Chandrashanker Shukla and other young men getting their training. That tradition still continues unchanged in the Navajivan Press. But that is not all. Gujarat has taken a leaf out of Bapu's book, and its insistence on a high standard of literature and on accuracy in translation has increased considerably. Before Bapu's influence changed its outlook, Gujarat abounded in shoddy translations of Bengali, Marathi and English books, in which the translators had calmly ignored all the difficult words, and gave only half the meaning of difficult sentences!

73

We were strolling about one day in the Yeravda Jail. Referring to something Bapu said, "It does not take me long these days to write on any subject that may happen to come before me, but that does not mean that I have attained this proficiency without effort. A colleague of mine in South Africa wanted to sit for some law examination. He had neither the time nor the energy to prepare himself for it; I used to make notes on Dutch Law for him, walk to his house every day, and teach him Law. Over and above this, I prepared my own cases for court with as much care as though I were going to be examined myself."

This reminded me of a story I had heard from Shri Maganlal-bhai. A Mussulman butler in South

Africa came to Bapu one day and said, "If only I knew English, how much more money I could earn! Today, I can hardly make both ends meet on the wages I get." "You come along to me," said Bapu, "I will teach you." "It is very kind of you, sir," said the butler, "and I appreciate it. Do not think me ungrateful — but when am I to do my work, if I come to you to learn English everyday?" "That is true," said Bapu, "but that need not deter us. If you cannot come to me, I will come to you." And he did. He walked four miles everyday to that butler's place to teach him English.

74

I do not remember the year in which the following happened. I had just returned from Chinchwad. Bapu's *Autobiography* was being published in serial form in the *Navajivan*. We began to discuss it. I said, "Your *Autobiography* is going to find a place in world literature as a unique achievement. People are already beginning to regard it as such. But it does not satisfy me completely. Youth is the time for a man to choose his ideals and the course his life shall take; it is then he decides which particular line will suit him best. And this involves a self-analysis and mental struggle which might be likened to a mighty battle. He is surrounded by so many conflicting ideals which all seem equally attractive, and his mind is in a turmoil of indecision. But I find no mention of such a turmoil in your *Autobiography*, althouh I wanted it and looked for it. You were prepared to eat meat, if it could help you to drive the British out of India. From there to *ahimsa*

is a far cry. How did you make the transition from one pole to the other? I want to know. But you have not written about that at all, anywhere."

Bapu answered, "It is my nature to stick to one path. I have felt no such turmoil as you speak of. In every circumstance of life I first think out my duty, and then go ahead. That is my way."

So then I asked again, "When did you first begin to feel that you were something out of the ordinary? That you were a man with a definite mission? When you were a schoolboy in the high school, did you feel that you were not like the other boys?"

Bapu did not pay full attention to my question. All he said was, "Well, it is a fact that I always found myself in the role of a leader to the boys of my class."

And then someone came, and this most important question was dropped there, never to be taken up again.

75

On another occasion, again in the course of a discussion on Bapu's *Autobiography*, I said, "Bapuji, you have really been very miserly in your *Autobiography*. You have left out many good things, and as it is hardly likely that you will take up your *Autobiography* from the point where you dropped it, how would it be if you just wrote down all the things which you have left out? It would make quite a large companion-volume to the *Autobiography*." Bapu said, "Why should I write everything? *You* write all that you know about me, if you care to."

I said, "Sometimes it seems as though you deliberately left out certain things. You have revelled

in writing about things that went against you, but have been very reticent in writing about other people. For instance, you have mentioned in your *Autobiography* the case of a friend, who was staying with you in South Africa, and brought a lady of easy virtue to your house in your absence. But you have not said in this connection that he was the same Mussulman who had persuaded you into eating meat in your school days and for whose sake you had turned thief in your own house on one occasion."

Bapu said, "You are quite right. I left that out deliberately. I was out to write my own story, and this thing was irrelevant. Besides, that man is still alive, and some people know of my association with him. If I gave the whole story, they might begin to hate him."

Seeing Bapu's equal tenderness towards all human beings, I was reminded of something that had happened many years before.

After Bapu's speech in the Banaras Hindu University there arose a long-drawn-out and heated controversy in the papers, centring around Bapu and Mrs. Annie Besant. Referring to that, Shri Natarajan of Bombay wrote in his *Indian Social Reformer*, "Every one's honour is safe in his (i. e. Bapu's) hands," a tribute which, I thought, was as splendid as it was well-deserved. No one except Natarajan has so beautifully described this aspect of Bapu's character.

Another story comes to my mind here.

We were talking about a prominent Muslim national worker. I mentioned some rather dubious

things he had done (from the public point of view). Bapu said sadly, "Yes, and he has fallen in my opinion because of them. But what of that? He is not going to suffer thereby. It matters little whether any one rises or falls in my opinion. My love remains ever the same."

76

In 1926-27, having finished his Madras *khadi*-tour, Bapu went to Orissa. We reached a village called Eatamati, where he delivered a public speech. Then people started giving him money and commodities. Someone brought a red pumpkin, someone *bijaura*, someone brinjals, someone wild-grown vegetables. Some untied their rags and gave copper coins also. I was walking about amongst the people collecting the money. My hands were green with the accumulated verdigris of the copper coins. I showed my hands to Bapu — my voice had deserted me. The next day when I went walking with Bapu through the fields, he said, "Oh, what poverty, what helplessness there is here! What can one do for these people? I hope that when my hour strikes, I may come to Orissa and die amongst these people. Those who come to see me would then at least see the pitiable state of these poor wretches, and someone from amongst my visitors might melt with pity and settle down here in order to serve and help them."

What could I say to this? I was too moved for speech. I just remained a mute witness of Bapu's divine compassion.

We reached Charbatia in the course of that same tour. There too, we held a similar meeting. I had thought that no place could be more pitiable than Eatamati. But Charbatia was even worse. Only a few came to the meeting, and of the few who came not one had any brightness on his face or any lustre in his eyes. They all looked as dull and lifeless as corpses.

Here, too, Bapu appealed for money ; here, too, those poor folk gave what they could ; here, too, my hands grew green with verdigris.

These people had never even seen silver rupees. Those copper coins were their whole wealth. If a copper came in to their hands, they had not the heart to spend it. They tied it up in their rags, or buried it somewhere, and the coins got all covered with green mould through long disuse.

I said to Bapu, " What is the use of taking such coins from these poor people ? " He replied, " This gift is a blessed one. For us, it is a sanctification and a dedication ; for them, it is a gleam of hope in a world darkened by despair. This money that they give is a symbol for them of better things to come."

There is another reason why that place and that day became memorable for me. We slept there that night. The next morning the sunrise was so glorious that Bapu called me to see it. Then he asked me, " You know what a state the Gujarat Vidyapith is in, would you take charge of it if I offered it to you ? " I said, " Bapuji, I know the state of the Vidyapith even better than you do. It has become rather a complicated problem. But if by taking charge of it I can

relieve you of one source of anxiety at least, I shall gladly do so." Bapu said, "A doctor cannot refuse to treat a patient however hopeless the condition of the patient might seem. A doctor cannot say, 'I'll treat only those whom I am certain of being able to cure.'"

I said, "Oh, it is not so bad as all that. I am sure I shall be able to make quite a good thing of the Vidyapith and gradually I will make it even village-minded."

When I took charge of the Vidyapith, I introduced *khadi*, carpentry, etc. into the curriculum as a matter of course. Along with that, I created a new degree the name of which might be translated roughly as 'Bachelor of Rural Service', and prepared some students for it. Shri Babal-bhai Mehta and Jhaver-bhai Patel were the first Bachelors of Rural Service to be produced by our Rural Service Department. Every one knows how splendidly they have carried on the work of rural service. In his book *Marun Gamadun* (My Village) Babal-bhai has given his own experiences of village uplift work, and they are as fascinating and exciting as any romance emanating from the fertile imagination of a writer of fiction.

78

Not very long after Bapu's return to India, he got an attack of fever in Bombay. He was staying in Revashankar-bhai's 'Manibhuvan', and Mahadev-bhai was attending on him. One day the fever rose so high that Bapu became delirious. He woke Mahadev-bhai up in the middle of the night and said, "Mahadev, the Bengalis sacrifice animals

in the temple at Kalighat in Calcutta, in the name of Kali. How are they to be taught that this is not religion, but the height of irreligion? Come, let us go and do Satyagraha there. Let us stop them. Then the infuriated Bengali *brahmanas* will fall upon us and tear us to pieces. But if in the process of putting an end to this animal-sacrifice we lose our lives, what does it matter?"

I had this from Mahadev-bhai's own lips.

79

The Congress was holding its annual session in Madras in 1926. We were staying in the house of Shri Shrinivasa Iyengar. Our host prepared a draft concerning Hindu-Muslim unity, and brought it to Bapu for his approval. Bapu had at that time withdrawn from active politics, and was devoting himself heart and soul to *khadi* work. When the draft was placed in his hands he said, "I am prepared to agree to anything, to any conditions, that will bring about a settlement between Hindus and Muslims. Where is the need to show this to me?" However, in deference to the wishes of its author, he cast a cursory glance over it and said, "It will do."

Bapu went to sleep soon after evening prayer, and awoke at an unearthly hour the next morning. He also awakened Mahadev-bhai. Hearing their voices I too, woke up. Bapu said, "I have committed a grave error. I did not read that draft properly last evening. I just said, without due consideration, that it was all right. But in the night I suddenly remembered that that draft gave a general permission to the Mussulmans to slaughter cows, and the question of cow-protection was conveniently ignored! How

can I bear this? If they slaughter cows, we cannot stop them by force, it is true, but we can at least win their trust by loving service and explain our point of view to them, can't we? As for me, I will not renounce my principle of cow-protection even to win Swaraj. Go immediately and tell those people that I do not accept that settlement. No matter what the consequences, I will not be a party to cow-slaughter."

As a rule Bapu's voice remained calm and unruffled even in moments of deepest distress, but the above remarks were made in tones which showed a mounting excitement. I was reminded of Arjuna's anguish and murmured to myself his burning words of grief and remorse: "*Aho bata! mahat papam kartum vyavasita vayam.*" (Alas! we are engaged in committing a great sin.) And then I changed the original verse, "We, who are endeavouring to kill our kindred from greed of the pleasures of kingship" into "We, who are betraying the cow, out of greed for the benefits of Swaraj."

That expressed Bapu's state of mind exactly.

80

Mrs. Annie Besant had set up a Home Rule League and started a strong political movement in India, as the result of which she was interned by the Government. Shri Shankarlal Banker came to Bapu, seeking his advice as to what was to be done then. Bapu wrote him a letter recommending Satyagraha. Shri Shankarlal Banker published that letter and prepared for Satyagraha; the Government therefore revised its policy and released Mrs. Annie Besant.

Then the movement changed its form completely, and the days of non-co-operation arrived. Mrs. Annie Besant started an English daily called *New India*, and everyday its readers were regaled with juicy tit-bits against Bapu. One day the tit-bit was particularly poisonous and, getting disgusted I asked Bapu, "Did you read the article in yesterday's *New India*?" Said Bapu, "I gave up reading *New India* long ago. I read it as long as it contained thoughtful and thought-provoking articles, but when it started indulging in personal attacks upon me, I stopped reading it. Personal abuse is bound to leave some effect on the mind. As long as I do not read it, I can retain my friendly feelings towards Mrs. Annie Besant, and if I meet her again, I shall meet her with the same heartfelt respect which I have always entertained for her."

81

The Ashram had just lately been started and we were living in the Kochrab bungalow still. Professor Karve came to Ahmedabad to collect funds for his institution, and he came to the Ashram also to meet Bapu.

Bapu gathered all the *ashramites* together and told them to prostrate themselves before Karveji. Then he explained, "When Gokhale-ji came to South Africa I asked him who were the most truth-loving people in his province. He said, 'I am afraid I cannot give my own name. I try to stick to truth as far as possible, but the exigencies of political life sometimes compel me to utter falsehood. There are only three perfectly truthful men amongst all the

people I know — Professor Karve, Shankarrao Lawate (who was doing prohibition work), and — .' " Bapu then went on to say, "Lovers of truth are as sacred to us as places of pilgrimage. The Satyagraha Ashram is dedicated to the worship of truth. It is a truly blessed day for us when a real lover of truth steps into our Ashram and sanctifies it by his presence."

Poor Karve was so moved that he could make no reply to this. He said with great effort, "Gandhiji, you have made me feel very embarrassed. What am I in comparison with you?"

82

In 1930 I was transferred to the Yeravda Jail to be with Bapu. I had taken a large quantity of slivers with me to last me through the five months of imprisonment which I had still to undergo. But the Government soon brought Shri Vallabh-bhai also to Yeravda. There was only a wall between him and us, but we could not meet him. Bapu felt this deeply. He often said, "Look how this Government is annoying us! They have brought Vallabh-bhai all the way from Sabarmati, and kept him so near that we can even hear his voice sometimes. And yet we cannot meet him. What fun does the Government get out of this, I wonder?" Those who saw Bapu from a distance could perceive in this only his noble patience. But those who had the privilege of knowing him intimately knew the intensity of his love, and the depth of his pain when that love was wounded. As Bapu walked in the prison courtyard, his thoughts

strayed continuously to him who sat behind that dividing wall.

One day Major Martin, the Jail Superintendent, brought a note from Vallabh-bhai: "I have run out of slivers. Please send me some if you can." Vallabh-bhai was a champion spinner. Whenever he had a spare moment, he spent it either in pacing his room to and fro like a lion in a cage or in spinning. His mother, too, had a passion for spinning. Even her blindness could not keep her away from her beloved spinning wheel. The people of her household had to hide their own slivers in order to keep them from her avid hands. If she found any slivers anywhere she just sat and spun them away! And Vallabh-bhai was a true son of his mother!

Bapu asked me, "Kaka, have you any slivers?" "As many as you want," I returned promptly, "but I have no knowledge of carding. If I give these away, what shall I do myself?" Said Bapu, "Do not worry. I will teach you carding. Or I will make slivers for you." "I should prefer to learn carding," said I, although I had my fears. I handed over all my slivers to be sent to Vallabh-bhai.

Then Bapu turned the adjoining room into a carding school with all the necessary paraphernalia, and taught me carding in a few days.

But then the rainy season came upon us. The string of my carding-bow grew slack with the moisture in the air. What was to be done? We pondered, and thought we should try putting the cotton and the carding-bow in the sun whenever it was fine. But that did not work, because it rained very hard and the sun did not shine at all. So we pondered some more, and remembered that there was an oven in

our courtyard which was used by the Anglo-Indian convicts for baking bread. I began to leave my cotton and carding bow-string there in the evenings. They responded to this treatment and became satisfyingly taut, but how were the ruffled fibres of the string to be smoothed? We hit upon the method of rubbing them down with the leaves of the bitter *neem*.

One day Bapu noticed that I was in the habit of breaking off a whole twig for the sake of four or five leaves. Whereupon he said, "This is *himsa* (violence). Others might not be able to understand, but you can. Even these four leaves should be plucked by us humbly, with due apologies to the tree. You break off whole twigs."

From the next day I left off doing so. Being tall, I had no difficulty in plucking just the four or five leaves I needed. Then I had another brain-wave. I started waxing my string with a bit of candle to protect it from the atmospheric moisture, on days when the oven was not working. This did the trick, and Bapu was pleased.

And then we stopped getting *datuns* (fresh *neem* or babul sticks, which are chewed and used as tooth-brushes) from outside. I said, "Bapuji, this place abounds in *neem* trees. I will make a nice, fresh *datun* for you every morning." Bapu agreed. The next day I brought a *datun*, pounded one end of it into a soft brush, and gave it to Bapu. After using it he said, "Now cut off the used bit of the *datun* and pound that end into a brush again." I said, surprised, "But why? We can get a fresh one every day." "I know we can," said Bapu, "but that does not mean we should. We have not the right. We

must not fling away a *datun* until it becomes too dry to be usable." So that was how it was done. Sometimes the 'brush' could not be made soft enough, and the thought of Bapu's gums and the few remaining teeth having to suffer was painful to me, but what could I do? I had been forbidden to cut a new *datun* until the old one had either become too small or had dried away into complete uselessness.

Thus, Bapu was not only an ideal prisoner, but also an ideal follower of the principle of *ahimsa.*

83

It was in 1921. The All India Congress Committee was holding its session in Bezwada, and its magnificence rivalled that of the annual sessions of the Indian National Congress itself. In that session it was decided to collect one crore of rupees for the Tilak Swaraj Fund; to make one crore of new members for the Congress, and to set twenty lacs of spinning-wheels working in the country.

After that there was a huge meeting. They made a high mound of earth, and the leaders were made to sit in a *mandap* (covered platform) erected on the mound. The mound, with its *mandap*, was as a tiny island in a surging ocean of humanity. There were no loud-speakers in those days, and voices could not reach very far. But that did not matter. The people were drunk with a new hope; they wanted no words; they just wanted to look at Gandhiji. The meeting had only just started when a cow, so to speak, 'gate-crashed', and got caught amongst the crowd. There was a hullabaloo. Bapu was only able to say, "You are not gathered here to look at me, you are here to

listen to the voice of Swaraj." But his voice was drowned in the noise of the agitated crowd. Bapu got upon a chair and stood in full view of the people. The sight of him only maddened further that already maddened multitude. It came surging in irresistible waves towards the hillock. There was no way of controlling it. I began to tremble for Bapu's very life. One can save oneself from one's enemies, but how is one to save oneself from one's blind devotees? The people now completely out of hand, began catching hold of the posts and pillars of the *mandap* and trying to scramble up them. It was obvious that if one of those pillars gave away, the whole *mandap* would collapse upon the helpless heads of the leaders.

Bapu grasped the situation in a flash, and stood up on his chair. He cast one lightning glance around and then, leaping from chair to chair, made for a spot where the crowd was narrowest. He leapt amongst the people and started elbowing to right and left, cleaving his way through them like an arrow flying to its mark. He was free at last, and disappeared. And the people never even knew what had happened.

I got on to a chair in my turn, and started looking through the crowd for a sight of Bapu. In vain! So I, too, prepared to leave the meeting. When the people realized that Gandhiji was no longer amongst them, they started dispersing without loss of time. I reached home after an infinity of trouble — and behold! Bapu was already there, calmly writing letters in his room, and looking as though he had never been to the meeting at all! "How did you manage to

return?" I asked. "The moment I got out of the crowd," he replied, "I saw somebody's carriage passing by. I stopped it, got in, and here I am!"

84

There was to be a meeting of the Gujarat Vidyapith Senate, and Bapu was to attend it. Perhaps a conveyance could not be sent for him in time. Anyway Bapu, passionately insistent on punctuality, set forth for the Vidyapith on foot. He had little hope of reaching there at the proper time, as there was but little time left for the meeting, and the Vidyapith was quite a distance from the Ashram. It being a lonely road, there was no hope of getting a timely lift either.

Bapu had walked on for some distance when he came across a *khadi*-clad cyclist pedalling along the road. Bapu stopped him and said, "Give me your cycle, please. I have to go to the Vidyapith." The astonished cyclist got off without a word, and handed his machine over to Bapu.

Bapu may have ridden a bicycle in South Africa. He certainly never had an occasion to do so in India. However, a little thing like that was not going to daunt him. He got on that cycle and pedalled away for all he was worth for the Vidyapith and were we not all astonished to see him arriving on time? But oh, the sight of Bapu in his little *dhoti*, with his bare body, riding that cycle! Never shall I see such a sight again.

Early in 1924 Bapu was released from the Yeravda Jail on account of illness. I, too, finished my year's sentence and proceeded to Poona to see him.

We had brought out a Gujarati primer for little children called *Chalangadi* (the go-cart). Its chief attraction lay in the fact that children could start reading words after learning a few letters of the alphabet. Every page was embellished with pictures of flowers and creepers. The whole book was printed on coloured art-paper in vari-coloured links. We had done our best to make that book as attractive for kiddies as possible, our idea being to develop artistic taste in our little readers while familiarizing them with the letters of the alphabet. We were selling it at five annas a copy, and Gujarat was according it a gratifyingly hearty welcome. I confess to a certain pride in it, since the whole conception of the book had been mine, and every page had been composed under my supervision and according to my directions.

One day I said to Bapu, "You have seen *Chalangadi*, have you not?" "Yes," he said, "I have seen it. It is beautiful, I admit. But — for whom have you made it? You are expert-in-chief of National Education, aren't you? The responsibility of conveying education to the children of the starving millions of India devolves upon you. If the ordinary primer today costs one anna, yours should cost only two pice — preferably one pice. Your production is cheap at five annas, I grant. But will you tell me

from where the poor people are to get five annas to buy it?"

I blushed at my own blindness, although I liked what we had done. I went to Ahmedabad and issued a simple edition of the primer, stripped of colour in inks and paper, and began selling it at five pice a copy. But even then, I had not the courage to take it to Bapu for his approval.

This reproach of Bapu's produced such a deep impression upon me, that the biography of Lord Buddha, which was being sold on behalf of the Vidyapith for Rs. 2/8/- a copy was sold in its second edition for 8 annas, without making any change either in paper or in printing. But the Navajivan Prakashan Mandir (its publishers) lost nothing thereby, for the biography became immensely popular in Gujarat and was sold in very large numbers throughout the province.

86

Whenever Bapu talked with any one, he was careful to keep in mind that person's way of life, his religious predilections and his likes and dislikes.

One day he received a letter from a Christian gentleman in which the correspondent had asked a question regarding Swadeshi.

Bapu wrote in answer, "Swadeshi is merely a biblical injunction put into action. Has not Christ said, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself'? If a man forsakes his neighbouring shopkeeper for one far off, he is forgetting his own neighbourliness and following the dictates of self-interest. The shopkeeper who

is his neighbour has opened a shop on the strength of the patronage he hopes to get from his neighbour. The principle of Swadeshi enjoins that we shall fulfil our duty towards our neighbours, and not neglect the obligations laid upon us as social beings."

This letter of Bapu's helped me to a clearer understanding of the words 'Love thy neighbour' than I had ever had before.

87

I am reminded of another episode of the same sort. Bapu was translating the *Ashram Bhajanavali* (collection of devotional songs sung at the Ashram prayers) into English for the benefit of Mirabehn (Miss Slade). He set aside a little time daily after prayers for this task, and soon his translation was complete. There is one verse which runs: "*Jaya jaya karunabdhe, Shri Mahadeva Shambho!*" (Victory, victory to Thee, Oh Shri Mahadeva Shambho, ocean of mercy)."

I have both read and made English translations of Sanskrit verses. "*Jaya jaya*" simply means "victory, victory". But Bapu had translated it, "Thy will be done." "How is this Bapu?" I asked. He replied, "The Lord is ever victorious throughout His creation. We pray that lust, anger etc. which are for ever becoming victorious in our hearts might be conquered and rendered impotent, that they might be routed. In other words, we pray that we might be enabled to do all things in accordance with the will of God. For a Christian, the best rendering of this can only be 'Thy Kingdom come,' or 'Thy will be done.' After all, what do we pray for? Is it not

simply that God should be ever victorious in our own hearts ? "

88

Mr. Quinn, the jailer in Yeravda prison, was an Irishman. He used to come every evening to make kind enquiries about us. He often sat with us and chatted. One day he said to Bapu, " I want to learn Gujarati." " Right," said Bapu, and started teaching him the Gujarati primer every evening, with affection and pleasure.

One day, when Mr. Quinn had left after his lesson, Bapu said to me, " I know that you would be able to teach him much better than I can, and it would save my time, too. But he particularly desires to learn from me."

After some time he began coming in the morning. One day he failed to turn up, and we were a little surprised. I made inquiries and discovered the reason, which I told Bapu the next day after our meal. " I know why Mr. Quinn did not come yesterday," I said. " He had to attend a hanging in the morning."

This upset Bapu badly. His face changed, and he said, " I feel as though I am going to be sick." Bapu knew that the gallows were situated not very far from where we lived. The moment he heard that a man had been hanged so near us only the previous day, his mind built up a picture of the whole thing, and he felt so upset that I got quite frightened.

* * *

One day Mr. Quinn said to Bapu, " Please write something in Gujarati for me on a piece of paper, so

that I may be able to familiarize my eyes with Gujarati handwriting." Bapu wrote in Gujarati, "Show love to your prisoners and if you ever feel angry, overcome your anger and become calm."

This same Mr. Quinn later became Superintendent of Visapur Jail, and several political prisoners from Gujarat arrived there. Something happened, and Mr. Quinn became exceedingly annoyed, the 'politicals', in their turn, getting so angry with him, that ultimately he would have resorted to shooting to bring them under control. But in Mr. Quinn's pocket lay the piece of paper on which Bapu had written that Gujarati sentence. He took it and read it over and over again, became calm and even apologised to the *satyagrahis*.

I am reminded of another somewhat similar incident. An Anglo-Indian servant in the prison asked Bapu for his autograph. Bapu wrote, "It costs nothing to be kind." That young man has often told me since, that that one sentence has helped to transform his whole nature.

89

I got tuberculosis, and went to stay on Sinhagadh fort, near Poona, for my health. When I was better, I went back to the Ashram. The doctor had advised complete rest for some months.

I had only just reached the Ashram when a girl came bringing lovely flowers in a tray. She gave them to me, saying, "Bapu has sent these for you." My eyes filled with tears. She continued, "Bapu told us to take flowers to you every day, because you love them so much."

No matter how busy Bapu might be, he always found time to come and see me every day.

Once an Ashram boy came to Bapu and said, "Bapuji, the Professor has come." (Shri Jivatram Kripalani was known as 'the Professor' in the Ashram.) Instantly Bapu turned to Devadas. "Deva," he said, "go quickly and see if Ba has any *dahi*. The Professor must be given *dahi* (curds). If Ba has no *dahi*, then get a sour lime from somewhere. Kaka must have some, even if no one else has."

Bapu's was an active love, and showed itself in service. It was his nature to be ever alert to find out the joys and sorrows of every body, and to try to increase the former and to lessen the latter.

One day I prepared red-pumpkin vegetable for Bapu in the Yeravda Jail and offered it to him, taking none of it myself. He ate a little and then said, "I know you do not care for red pumpkin. But this red pumpkin to-day is quite unusually good. Try some." This was really surprising from Bapu, for he had always taught *aswada* (conquest of the palate). The same thought occurred to him, too, at once, for he said, "I asked you to taste it so that you might know how sweet even a red pumpkin can be sometimes."

And I remember another story.

I had gone to Bapu for some reason or another. A gentleman came to him with an offering of fruit, which he placed before Bapu. Amongst other things there were some really excellent *chikus*. Bapu immediately picked out two fine, large *chikus* and put them in my hand, saying, "Kaka, give these to Mahadev.

He simply loves *chikus*." Mahadev-bhai's house adjoined mine. I went to him and said, "Mahadev-bhai, I bring you a message of love." Mahadev-bhai gazed upon the *chikus* with delighted eyes and exclaimed, "True! True! This is truly a message of love!"

90

Bapu's mind always dwelt on fundamentals. He went to the root of every matter, and no part or aspect of life was too insignificant for his consideration. His friend Kallenbach, who was a German Jew, (and, incidentally quite a successful and prosperous architect), always said, "What you say may convince one, or it may not; but no one can possibly doubt that there is deep and serious thought behind it."

As soon as I went to the Ashram I realized the truth of this for myself. I simply could not bring myself to like the Ashram rice and I said to Bapu one day, "Is this rice or clay, Bapu? We never eat rice like this." Bapu laughed. "I know, I know," he assured me mirthfully, "but do not be so hasty. Give it a chance to prove its worth."

And then he explained the matter to me with his usual zeal and thoroughness.

"The trouble is," he said, "that people want their rice to be white and dainty like jasmine buds. They buy rice that has already been polished in the mills, and so denuded of its nourishing properties. The most nourishing part of the rice is the part where it sprouts, and that part is usually polished completely away. Not content with this, they wash and wash the rice to whiten it still further, thus stripping it

of a few more of its nourishing properties. Then they boil the starch out of it, and throw it away! So that by the time the rice is fit to be eaten there is hardly any nourishment left in it at all. If it is not well cooked, you cannot chew it properly; and if it is, you are apt to eat more of it than you actually need. Result — you feel heavy and drowsy after eating it, and after a while you develop a belly that might rival that of the pot-bellied god Ganesha himself! That kind of rice is taboo in the Ashram. First, we only have hand-pounded rice in our kitchen. We are careful not to wash it too much. We allow it to soak for a long time in water, and then we cook it in such a way that neither the starch nor the water is wasted, and all its nourishing properties are preserved. When it has been thoroughly cooked we chew it into pulp. It is quite tasty then. It is sweet even without sugar. You can only eat a little of it, it is very nourishing, and it does not make one drowsy or lethargic."

I could hardly fail to be impressed by so many and such convincing arguments. I began to take interest in such rice, to realize its good qualities and to like it. Finally, I ended up as a staunch supporter of Bapu's hand-pounded thoroughly boiled rice.

91

One day I asked Bapu, "What made you prefer the cap we now call the 'Gandhi cap' to all other forms of head-gear?" "Well," replied Bapu, "I considered carefully all the caps and head-coverings which obtain in the various provinces of India. I bore

in mind the fact that this is a hot country, and therefore our heads need to be kept covered. The Bengalis and some South Indian Brahmins go bare-headed, of course, but as a rule Indians always wear something or other on their heads. The Punjabi *phenta* (turban) looks fine, but it takes up too much cloth. The *pugree* is a dirty thing. It goes on absorbing perspiration but does not show it, and so seldom gets washed. Our Gujarati conical Bangalore caps look hideous to me. The Maharastri Hungarian caps are a little better, but then they are made of felt. As for the U. P. and Bihari caps, they are so thin and useless that they can hardly be considered caps at all. They are not even becoming. So thinking over all these various types of head-gear I came to the conclusion that the Kashmiri cap was the best. It is light as well as elegant; it is easy to make; it can be folded which makes it easily portable. One can put it in one's pocket, or pack it comfortably in one's trunk. The Kashmiri cap is made of wool. I thought it should be made of cotton cloth. Having thus chosen the form, I then began to consider the colour. Which colour would be most suitable for a cap? Not a single colour appealed to me. So I fixed upon white. White shows up dirt and grease, so white caps would have to be frequently washed. (A great recommendation!) Also, white cloth is easily washable. The cap being of the folding sort, it would be quite easy to press after washing and iron out into a fresh, clean, smooth white cap! What could be better or more becoming? So, having thought all this out, I made this cap. As a matter of fact, the climate conditions of our country render the 'sola' *topee* the most suitable head-gear for Indians. It

affords perfect protection to the head, eyes, and back of the neck from the burning sun and, being made of pith, is delightfully light and cool. It lets in a little air too. The only reason why I do not advocate the 'sola' *topee* is, that it does not harmonize at all with the Indian dress. Moreover, people these days dislike anything that has a European flavour. If our craftsmen would evolve a head-gear which combined all the qualities of the sola hat, but with an Indian shape, they would be doing a great service to the whole country. It only needs a little bit of thought. I am sure they would not find it difficult."

92

Bapu came to Wardha and began to live in a garden, now known as Maganwadi. He saw the condition of the people there, and his thoughts turned seriously to problems of food and diet. He discovered that you could get but few vegetables in the Wardha market and those that were available were very dear and beyond the means of the poor. So he made inquiries in the villages round about to see what vegetables were available there, what vegetables were eaten by the villagers and not sent to the Wardha market, and so on. Then such vegetables were brought to Maganwadi, and carefully studied for their food value, for the amount of nourishment that would be extracted from them, and for their beneficial as well as harmful properties. All who ate those vegetables were asked to recount their experiences. Having experimented thus, he came to the conclusion that several of those vegetables had all the necessary

nutritive elements and could be eaten with benefit by everybody.

Side by side with this, Bapu was experimenting with soya beans also. Soya beans were brought to Maganwadi, cooked and then ground into flour. The soya bean experiments went on for many days. Bapu read much about them. But it seems that soya beans could not give him full satisfaction, for he said nothing much about them afterwards.

93

After the 1927 session of the Students' World Federation in Mysore, its President, Rev. Mott, an American who had spent his life working amongst students, came to Ahmedabad and asked Bapu for an interview. Bapu had not a minute to spare in the daytime, so he gave him ten minutes at night, just before retiring to bed. I went to the Ashram from the Vidyapith to be present at the interview as I was very curious to see what, and how much, Bapu and the Reverend would be able to say in the course of ten short minutes!

Bapu was lying on his cot in the courtyard. The Rev. Mott came and sat near him on a bench. He had written down the questions he wanted to ask. He asked something about the Harijan movement, about the effects of missionary activities in India, and then he asked two questions which evoked answers that engraved themselves on my very soul.

Question: A life like yours must be full of ups and downs, of hopes and disappointments. Amongst all the things you have to face and experience, will you tell me what comforts and sustains you most?

Answer: The thing that comforts and sustains me most is the non-violence of our masses, in spite of the gravest provocation.

Question: And what is it that causes you the most concern and keeps you restless night and day?

This question was truly a strange one! Bapu paused for a minute to think, then said, "The hardness of heart of the educated."

This startling answer shattered my peace of mind. I returned to the Vidyapith and lay down — but not to sleep. Miserably I thought, "I get the sons of the ignorant here, and educate them; which means, that I lessen the number of those who give Bapu comfort, and increase the number of those who cause him anxiety. Is that all the result I am going to get after my untiring effort to serve? True, the education I am imparting is labelled 'national', but how can I allow myself to be content with merely that?"

It was after this incident that I started classes for village work, in the Vidyapith.

94

Bapu has a sister called Goki-behn. When he started his Ashram in South Africa, he gave everything he possessed to that Ashram. When he came to India, he renounced his right to the property he had inherited. He got his relatives together and signed away not only his own right to the house-property in which he had a share but also that of his four sons. Thus he freed himself completely from the burden of worldly possessions.

Now the question arose — how was his sister Goki-behn to be provided for? He never took money

from anybody for private purposes. But he made an exception in Goki-behn's favour. He asked his friend, Dr. Pranjivan Mehta, to send her ten rupees every month.

After a few days Goki-behn's daughter lost her husband, and went to live with her mother. Goki-behn wrote to Bapu, saying that her expenses had increased now, and her daughter had to grind their neighbour's corn in order to eke out a meagre livelihood. Bapu wrote back: "Grinding corn is an excellent occupation. You will both improve in health. We also grind corn in the Ashram." He added, "You both have a right to come and live in the Ashram, whenever you like and do whatever social service suits you. You will live as we do. I cannot send you anything there, nor can I ask my friends to do so."

Goki-behn, who thought nothing of grinding corn to make both ends meet, would have found no difficulty in adapting herself to the rigours of Ashram life; but, there were Harijans in the Ashram, and that was a pill she could not swallow. She was old-fashioned in her views; to live, eat and drink with Harijans was beyond her. She did not come to the Ashram. She only came once to meet Bapu. It was then that I had the privilege of seeing her.

95

In the early days of the Ashram, when we were living in Kochrab, there was a well opposite our bungalow, on the other side of the road. From it we drew our water. We had no servants in the Ashram: we did all the work ourselves.

Bapu had to go to Bombay occasionally, which meant the vicissitudes of third-class travel, no sleep the whole night, and unremitting work the whole day before he could go to bed. At first I thought that Bapu must fall asleep the moment his head touched the pillow, but I discovered my error. Having retired to his room, he began discussing the abolition of untouchability with Ba! There was a Harijan family that had come and settled in the Ashram. Ba simply could not bring herself to eat food cooked by them, and confined herself, poor dear! to a fruitarian diet. But Bapu could not tolerate that either. He said, "Look, I simply will not have untouchability in the Ashram. If you insist on making these distinctions between human beings, go and live in Rajkot. You cannot live with me and practise untouchability." This sort of bickering would continue till late into the night. On rising in the morning the good work of converting Ba would be taken up by her two sons, Ramadas and Devadas. "Ba!" they would argue, "you had none of these scruples in South Africa. What is come over you here?" Ba would reply, "That was a foreign land. Things did not matter so much over there. But here we are in our own country. How can I break the rules and conventions of my society here?"

We had our daily programme of drawing and fetching water from the well. Bapu, too, came along with his water-pot. One day I said to him, "Bapuji, you had no sleep last night, and your head is aching. And you ground corn with me for quite a long time this morning. Please go and rest a little now. We will see to the water." But would Bapu listen? Never. Knowing how useless it was to argue

with him I started drawing water from the well along with Ramadas, and the other *ashramites* began to take it in vessels to the Ashram in order to fill the empty vessels there.

Suddenly I got my chance and stole off to the Ashram unperceived. I gathered together all the empty vessels I could find, big and small, and, calling all the Ashram children to follow me, went off to the well at the head of the impromptu procession. And then I began my mischief. I drew the water, filled a vessel and cleverly avoiding Bapu, would hand it over to someone or other to carry back to the Ashram. The children 'caught on', and helped me gleefully and with a will. They would rush up to me, wait tense and alert for the vessels to fill, pounce upon them, and make off with them in the twinkling of an eye. Poor Bapu stood there, patiently awaiting his turn, but we saw to it that his turn never came! At last, tired of waiting, he went back to the Ashram to look for an empty vessel for himself. No empty vessels, however, could be found. But seeing a children's bath-tub lying empty, he took it up, brought it to the well, and ordered triumphantly, "Fill this!" "But how will you carry it, Bapu?" I asked, appalled. "I will show you how I will carry it," returned Bapu grimly, "you just fill it!"

As usual, Bapu won. Mutely I filled a medium-sized pot with water. Mutely I placed it on his head. Mutely I watched him carry it off.

In the year 1919, the Amritsar atrocities had sent a thrill of horror throughout the length and breadth of India, and the Government had set up a Committee to enquire into the matter. But the Congress was not satisfied with it, and so it decided to boycott the Committee, and kept severely aloof from it.

It did not occur to anybody that they could do anything more than just boycott the Enquiry Committee — to anybody, that is, except Bapu. He was not going to stop there. He set up his own Committee through the Congress, and began to examine witnesses and collect and sift evidence. That Committee was composed of people like Chittaranjan Das, Motilal Nehru, M. R. Jayakar, Abbas Tyabji. Bapu was its chairman. The enquiry lasted for three months. (Incidentally the unspeakable abominations that came to light then gave such a shock to the aged Abbas Tyabji, that he nearly died of it.) Evidence was collected from 1,700 witnesses, and the statements of 650 people were published. Then Bapu had to make his report. He brought all the matter along with him to the Ashram. The reports of the atrocities had set his blood boiling. The task of writing his own report went on day and night. Literally, he wrote night and day, sleeping only for a couple of hours or so every night. Sometimes in the afternoon his exhausted body would go on strike. One day I saw him dozing against his cushion, the paper in his left hand, the pen in his right, and his mouth open. Thus for just a few moments, and then he started awake

embarrassed as though he had been caught committing a crime! He sat up, and began writing again.

The Report was finished, and was placed before the Committee. After it had been signed by all the members Bapu said to them: "We have signed this report, but we must go further. We must take a solemn vow that we shall not rest until we have rendered a repetition of such atrocities impossible in our country." All the members sloemnly took that vow. What happened after that is history.

97

It was 1922, and Bapu was a "State Guest" in Sabarmati Jail. The Government had instituted legal proceedings against him, and he was to stand his trial in a few days. In the meanwhile, crowds of people came to see him.

The 'best rooms' of Sabarmati Prison are situated in its right-hand corner. They are called *Phansi Kholi* (hanging rooms), because they are reserved for those who are awarded capital punishment. Bapu was kept in the *Phansi Kholi.*

I set forth one day to meet him, and encountered Shri Abbas Tyabji at the Prison gate. He too, had come to meet Bapu. We went through the gate, turned to the left, and walked towards Bapu's room. Bapu was on his verandah. The moment he saw Abbas-saheb he hastened forward, and began descending the steps. Abbas-saheb also hastened forward, and started ascending the steps. They met on the steps, and the meeting was an astonishing one. Bapu flung his left arm round Abbas-saheb's waist, caught Abbas-saheb's flowing white beard in his right hand, puffed out his

cheeks, and cried, "Burrrrr!" Abbas-saheb shouted "Burrrrr" in return, gleefully, like a child. Then they both burst out laughing. And I stood there, wondering what on earth this mystic "burrrr" could mean!

Then came the Dandi March (1930), and prison both for Abbas-saheb and me as well as for a host of others. I asked Abbas-saheb: "That day, when you met Bapu, you both said 'burrrr!' What did it mean?" "Oh," said Abbas-saheb with his joly laugh, "that is part of a story I once told Bapu, long ago. He liked it so much, that he converted that 'burrrr' into a form of greeting." (As a matter of fact the "burrrr" became quite a convention between these two lively friends. Whenever they met, they burst into a joyous "burrrr!" accompanied by a hearty hug on Abbas-saheb's side, and equally hearty beard-pulling on Bapu's.)

I was, of course, eager to hear the original "burrrr" story, and Abbas-saheb related it to me. But I have forgotten it now. I remember, however, the interpretation I put on that unusual, not to say startling, greeting. It was this: "Burrrr!" said Bapu, which meant, "the observance of the vow we took in 1919 has brought me here." To which Abbas-saheb replied, "burrrr!" meaning "its going to bring me here, too!"

I gave my interpretation to Abbas-saheb. "Well," he said, "nothing of that sort was in my mind then, but there is a lot of truth in what you say. It is a strange friendship, Bapu's and mine!... I am simply amazed at the idea of myself in prison. I could never have believed in it! I could never

have believed myself capable of the things he has been making me do — that wizard, Bapu ! "

98

In 1936-37, Bapu was living in Maganwadi (Wardha), and I was living at Borgaon, a few miles from Wardha. Bapu's output of work was simply tremendous. He could not find time even to answer the letters he received, so he used to get up at two or three o'clock in the morning to write his letters. When I heard about this, I could not restrain myself from registering a protest — but I led up to it in an indirect manner. " Bapuji," I said, " you wrote a book about health and its preservation in South Africa, did you not ? " " Yes," said Bapu. " You have dealt with everything there ranging from food and digestion to sexual continence ; but, (I broached my point carefully), you have left out one most important matter." " Which ? " asked Bapu, his interest quickened at last. " Sleep," I said. " You have not a single chapter on sleep." " Oh !" said Bapu carelessly. " Sleep ! But what is there to write about sleep ? When a man feels sleepy, he sleeps. What more can one say about it ? " " Ah ! " I exclaimed triumphantly, " that is just it ! See how careful you are about food ! You eat at fixed times, and you eat a fixed quantity. You do a fixed amount of work every day. You satisfy the legitimate claims of all who come to you. You are particular about answering all the letters that come to you. You are careful regarding everything but sleep ! If your work increases, it's your poor sleep that is invariably sacrificed. How long can this go on, Bapu ? Nature

forgives abstinence from food but refuses to tolerate abstinence from sleep. To neglect sleep is inevitably to invite punishment."

Bapu became very grave. He said, "What you say implies clearly that I am not a true follower of the *Gita*. I take from the body only that amount of work which it is capable of giving. I do not believe that the work I am doing is my work — it is God's work. Let Him see to it. I am bound only to do my share of His work. If I try to do more, then that would be pride, not true service."

* * *

Some time passed; I came to Maganwadi from Borgaon. Mahadev-bhai said to me, "Bapu is not feeling well today. He is sleeping. The moment he awoke this morning he said, 'I am feeling rather ill today. My blood-pressure must have increased. Better send for the doctor.' An unheard of thing, as you know, for Bapu to talk of sending for a doctor for himself!"

I purposely kept away from Bapu that day. After the evening prayer he talked of his health. His opening words were: "I am not yet a perfect follower of the *Gita*."

I had forgotten that old incident, but these words brought that conversation vividly back to me. I thought to myself, "Bapu has forestalled me, and left me nothing to say now!"

After that, Bapu made it a rule to pay his debt to sleep as punctiliously as he paid all his other debts.

99

Everybody who has read Gandhiji's *Autobiography* will remember how he was set upon by Pathans in South Africa, and left for dead ; and how, on regaining consciousness, his first words were: " My assailants must not be punished. I forgive them freely."

After that day Bapu's great and faithful friend, Mr. Kallenbach, never allowed Bapu to go anywhere alone and unattended. Kallenbach was a tall, well-built and powerful man, an adept at wrestling, boxing, and in all the arts of attack and defence. Where-ever Bapu went, there went also his faithful body-guard, Kallenbach.

One day Bapu was going to a meeting. It came to Kallenbach's ears that the Whites were staging an attack on Bapu, and he slipped a revolver into his hip-pocket, just in case of trouble. When Bapu learnt this, he was greatly annoyed. " Throw your revolver away," he ordered. " Is your trust in God or in that revolver ? Actually, there is no need whatever for you to come with me. I need no protection. Am I not safe in God's hands ? So long as He desires to take work from me, He is bound to keep me safe."

* * *

Later on there was an incident (related to me by Maganlal-bhai Gandhi), which might be regarded as a sequel to the one I have related above. The Whites were holding a meeting which Kallenbach was attending. He was standing on the fringe of the crowd. He got into a discussion, and then fell out violently with someone there. An Englishman loves a fight.

Whether his arms be muscular or flabby, his sleeves, so to speak, are always rolled up. "Come along," roared that particular Englishman to Kallenbach, "come along. Let us fight it out." One can imagine what must have happened then. Kallenbach, tall, powerful, wrestler, boxer, and fighter, challenged publicly to a fight! He must have stiffened, his face flushed and hardened, and his eyes glittered........ And then one can imagine how a sudden memory must have brought a revulsion; how his body must have relaxed, his hands unclenched, and the light of battle died out from his eyes as he said calmly, "But I am not going to fight you."

Think of it! A well-known fighter like Kallenbach, refusing a public challenge! Not even a coward would have dared to do it. Kallenbach's refusal electrified all who heard it.

One wonders how many there were in that crowd to realize the courage it must have taken to behave like a coward!

100

In Champaran the prospect of Bapu's enquiry into the injustices and atrocities under which the people laboured was breathing a new life into that part of the country. And the schools which Bapu opened in many places were also having their influence.

Every one was feeling happier, because hopeful — every one, except the White planters.

Someone said to Bapu, "The planter of this place is the worst of the lot. He is bent upon murdering you. He has requisitioned arms."

When Bapu heard this, he went off alone one night to the bungalow of that planter and said: "I hear that you have requisitioned arms in order to kill me. That is why I have come alone and in secret to your house." The poor planter just stood there, turned to stone.

101

It was probably in 1917. The evening prayer was over and Bapu, propped up against a pillow, sat on his bed talking. It was rather chilly, so Ba had folded a sheet and flung it over his back and shoulders. Bapu was deep in conversation with Shri Ravji-bhai Patel. As they talked, Ravji-bhai's glance wandered to Bapu's shawl, and became fixed upon a curious black line that was etched upon the white cloth. He leaned forward and looked at it intently — it was a great black snake, that had crawled up Bapu's back right up to his shoulder! Having arrived at the edge of nothingness, it was now looking this side and that, seeking a further way. Bapu saw that Ravji-bhai's attention had wandered, and that Ravji-bhai's eyes were not upon him, but upon his shoulder. He asked, "What is it, Ravjibhai?" (Bapu himself was feeling a weight upon his shoulder.) Ravji-bhai never lost his head in a tight place and on this occasion, too, he kept cool and collected. He knew that if he spoke loudly, Ba and all the others would be frightened, there would be hustling and bustling and running about, and then the snake would be frightened in its turn. So he just murmured gently, "Nothing particular, Bapu; merely a snake on your back. Keep quite still!" "I shall keep quite still," said

Bapu, "but what are you thinking of doing?" Ravji-bhai replied, "I shall gather up the shawl by its four corners and remove it from your back, snake and all." The snake feeling that something was up, had dived into the folds of the shawl and lay hidden there. Bapu said quietly, "I shall keep perfectly still: but take care of yourself."

Ravji-bhai gathered up the shawl and walked some distance with it, and the moment the snake crawled out of the shawl, he flung it far from him....

(Ravji-bhai has related this incident at length, and with all the details, in his book. I have told the story as I remember it.)

* * *

The next day the papers had a romantic tale of a cobra that reared itself up behind Bapu and spread its hood above his head. This meant, clearly, that Bapu was going to become an Emperor. A friend said to me, "The cobra stopped at Bapu's shoulder. If it had climbed up to his head, there is no doubt at all that Bapu would have become King Emperor of India."

This incident came to my mind once while I was talking to Bapu, and I asked, "What did you feel, Bapu,—what did you think, when that snake crawled up your body?" He said, "I had one moment of terror—but only one. I recovered myself immediately, and then I felt nothing. I thought if that snake bit me I would say to every one, 'The snake must not be killed. The moment you see a snake, your first impulse is to kill it; and so far, I have not prevented any of you from doing so. But the snake that has bitten me must have nothing to fear. It must be allowed to go free."